



A TRAGEDY OF
THE NINETEENTH



HENRY MILNER



"Woman, I cannot give you back the man you call husband.
His conscience drove him away."

THE LAD FELIX

A Tragedy of the Ne Temere

By HENRY MILNER

Illustrated by G. M. Hall

"Light the torches to-night, and let them burn until
the land is freed from this iniquity."

TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1912



Mr. and Mrs. J. H. [illegible]
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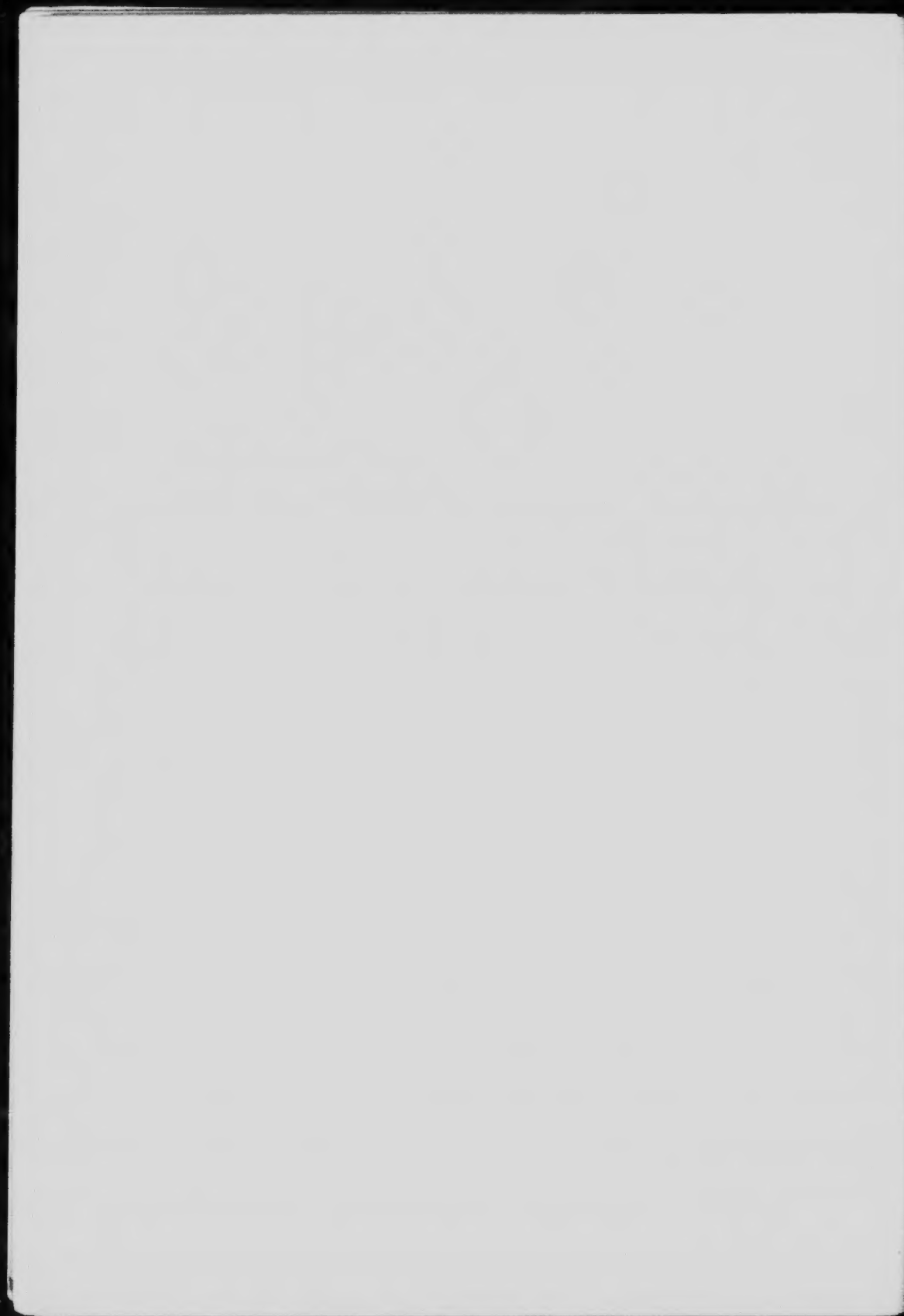
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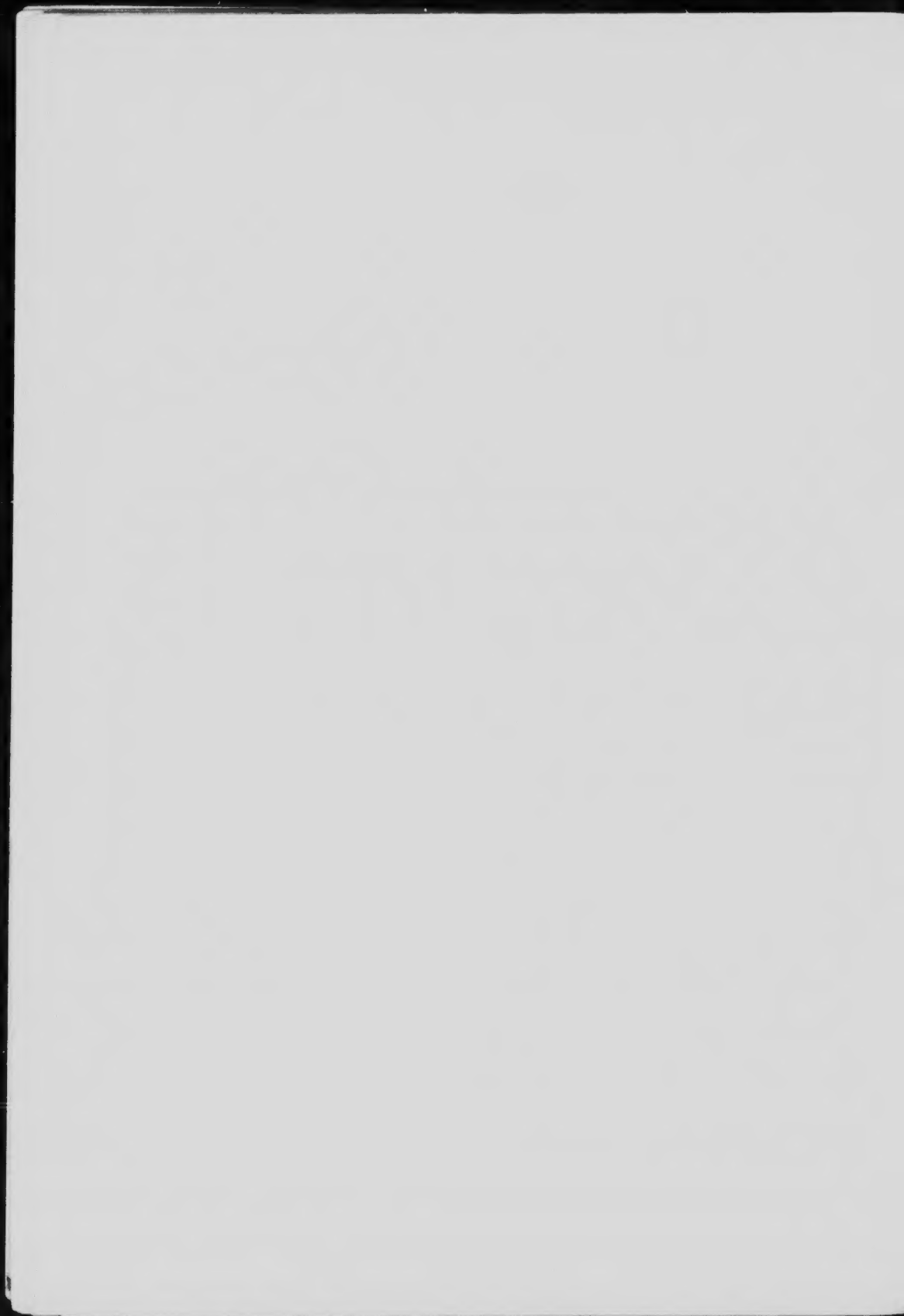
To Priacilla



PREFACE

It is not the intention of the author of this story to reflect upon the commendable work of the Roman Catholic Church. But in its legislative and administrative capacities the Church of Rome is just as human as the Protestant Church. It is just as likely to err. And in common with probably the majority of Canadians, Protestant and Roman Catholic, the writer believes that in reviving the undesirable, effete tenets propounded in the *Ne Temere* decree, the authorities of the Roman Church will produce discord where we now have harmony, religious strife where there is now brotherly love and Christian charity.

No word or suggestion of offence to any member of the Roman Catholic Church, lay or clerical, is intended. The aim of the author is merely to show what privations and hardships must be endured by hundreds of helpless women and children should the application of the *Ne Temere* in Canada be continued. Once this is appreciated the Canadian hierarchy will no doubt seek to have the law repealed; and if this story helps, even in an unimportant way, to present to the minds of its readers a true picture of the home-wrecking and unhappiness that must follow in the wake of the decree, should it not soon be voided, the narrative will have served its purpose.



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“COME now, I beseech you, O most holy and blessed fathers and princes, Peter and Paul, that all the world may understand and know that if ye are able to bind and to loose in heaven, ye are likewise able on earth, according to the merits of each man, to give and to take away empires, kingdoms, pryncedoms, marquisates, duchies, countships, and the possessions of all men. For if ye judge spiritual things, what must we believe to be your power over worldly things? and if ye judge the angels who rule over all proud princes, what can ye not do to their slaves?”—*Extract from excommunication which Gregory passed upon Henry the Fourth.*

THE LAD FELIX

CHAPTER I.

TILL DEATE US DO PART."

IN the drowsy village of Chippendale, Ontario, there stands an unpretentious hill. Like the ambitions of surrounding farmers it does not mount very high. Its modest slopes reach down to the edge of a miniature river, threading its silent way through miles of well kept land, tilled by man's hand that it might bring forth the increase and pay off the mortgage.

Near the hilltop, and partly hidden from view by sheltering maples, stands Hillcrest Farm. It is evening-time in September, and the fast disappearing sun has thrown a crimson mantle over the low-roofed homestead. Cows graze lazily near a clump of bush, and an old, stiff-jointed horse is at the water's edge, enjoying a cool drink.

From the summit of the hill may be seen the stunted tower of St. Paul's Church, Marysville. As far as eye can see the scene is enveloped in evening calm.

Standing side by side upon the rose-scented veran-

dah of the little farmhouse, sweet clematis climbing and twining and intertwining its clinging tendrils about the sunlit lattice, are John and Barbara Terrance.

Yesterday was their wedding day.

In the glory of this evening the girl's feet dance joyously upon the golden streets of a new-found heaven, whose jewelled gates were closed to her in the days of maidenhood, and the flaring light of a thousand wondrous lamps light the joyous way.

"I am so happy to-night, John, dear," said Barbara, softly.

"Sure, that's no wonder. Did you not tell me last night that you had the best man in the world with his arms around you?" replied John, with twinkling eye.

"Ah, but what did you say?" asked the girl, blushing.

"That I owned the sweetest and neatest girl in creation for a wife," he answered, admiringly.

"Our lives will be very happy," went on Barbara.

"Never a cloud will come into the sky, girlie," returned the enraptured husband, tightening his hold about her waist. Nestling closer, she raised a hand and stroked his cheek.

"And you will always love me and protect me?"

John drew her tightly to him, kissing her brow, her eyes, her cheeks, her mouth.

"Always—always—always, my own darlin'!"

"Never leave me—or forsake me?"

"Never—never—never, my own little colleen!"

"Till death—us do part?"

"Till—death—us—do—part."

The last word was smothered in a rapturous embrace that bore their spirits into realms of delirious bliss, where Love reigns for aye, and the password is a kiss.

John Terrance's parents, Michael and Norah Terrance, came to Canada from County Derry, about forty years before this story opens. They had, in common with most of their class, more hope than money, although between them they had enough to buy a few acres of land in Chippendale, then a sparsely populated agricultural village, six miles from Marysville. They faced the work of clearing the land and building a home with magnificent courage, and more than once looked with undaunted spirits upon ruined crops and butterless bread.

In due time their son John was born, and straightway baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. There were other children, but for various reasons, and without assigning any particular one for their departure, they all left this vale of tears. Michael Terrance viewed their going with resignation, and after each little funeral told his sorrowing wife that the saints appeared to have discovered a flaw in his making, and refused to trust him with a family. Their first-born, John, was the only one of six who decided to stand by his parents, and with this end in view lived on.

When John reached the age of twenty-one, Michael Terrance smoked his last pipe and bade wife and son farewell. As the old gentleman did not expect to return he left one or two injunctions, that of first importance being that John should continue to work the farm and "kape his mother from wonderin' phwat was comin' nixt," and that if he ever married, "and the owld lady didn't wish to live wid him," he was to find her a cottage and "look afther her."

"If thim insurance min don't throy to bate your mother out of her two thousand dollars she'll not be a drain on ye," said Michael to his son, "and," he added, with unusual energy for a dying man, "spakin' about drains remoids me that the south field is carryin' more wather than is good for it."

He then turned over on his side and died.

The funeral proved to be the most successful in the history of that section, and the widow whispered to a lady in the first buggy that it would have done Michael's heart good to have seen it. During the ensuing six years John devoted himself to his mother and the farm. At the end of that time he had the good fortune to look into the beautiful face of Barbara King, an orphan from Ulster Province, who at that time was living with her brother Jim and his wife Hannah. Their farm stood on the main road which lay between Chippendale and Marysville. As the admiration was mutual, it quickly developed into love. The only obstacle between the two was a difference of faith, Barbara being an adherent of the

Church of England. But, if love laughs at locksmiths, so doth it triumph over greater barriers. Barbara, however, made it clear to the man who wooed her that she intended to remain a Protestant to the end of her days. As her lover had sworn similar fidelity to the Roman Church, he could find no fault with her determination.

John's mother did not look kindly upon the union. When told of the engagement, she cried bitterly, and invoked her favorite saints, but her love for her son was so strong that his pleadings won the day, and with some reservation she promised to attend the wedding at the King homestead.

The family priest, Father McCarthy, frowned upon the union, declared it to be unholy, and registered a vow to keep John Terrance in the fold.

Three months after the knot was tied by the Reverend Haslem Reid, M.A., rector of St. Paul's Church, Marysville, Widow Terrance removed herself and her treasured possessions to a cottage in Marysville. It was not without pain that she left the old homestead, but she kept the reason for her departure a secret. Barbara tried all means to keep her with them, but the old lady only shook her head and said, "Go on wid ye, ye don't want an owld woman like me, an' I'll be happy livin' near the church."

CHAPTER II.

THEY CALLED HIS NAME FELIX.

"He preferred me
Above the maidens of my age and rank,
Still shunned their company and still sought ruine.
I was not won by gifts, yet still he gave,
And all his gifts, tho' small, yet spoke his love."
—Dryden.

A YEAR after John and Barbara's marriage Felix came. Like all other people who are destined to take a more or less important part in the world's affairs, he arrived with becoming humility, submitting to the daily series of indignities and caresses with no more pronounced objection than an occasional squall. During these tempests his father regarded the atom of humanity with quiet amusement and the atom's mother kissed him into good temper again.

When the excitement attendant upon the entry of Felix into this wonderful world had abated, John drove over to tell his mother the good news. He entered the cottage with so little warning that Widow Terrance was thrown into a great fluster, during which she tried to hide the work she held in her hands. In doing so something very small, very white and very dainty fell to the floor—a signal for the son to pick it up.

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"Sure now, I know right well what ye've come to tell me, John. Give me that at once. What business have ye to come in widout knockin'," cried the newly created grandmother.

John laughed heartily at the little garment he held, and refused to surrender it until he had turned it round and round, and over and over, and up this way, and inside out and outside in, and had looked it through and through in growing bewilderment.

"Whatever is it, mother?" he asked, pretending not to know.

"Sure, it's a shurt for the young darlin'. Now, what is it, John?"

"You've just told me, mother."

"Ach, I mane the child. What is it?"

"Oh, it's a boy, mother—the finest you ever saw."

"Hear him now," said the happy grandmother, as she bustled off to dress for a visit to the "young darlin'."

While driving his mother to Hillcrest Farm, John sang all the way. He was thinking most of Barbara, and during the last mile filled the quiet evening air with the music of "Norah, the Pride of Kildare."

Barbara turned a bright face to Widow Terrance as she entered the room where the "darlin'" lay. She "remembered no more the anguish for joy that a man was born into the world."

"Grandma Terrance," she said quietly, her face radiant with the light of motherhood, "come, see him."

Mrs. Terrance walked over to the bed and kissed her son's wife, John standing in the background with an air of kingly pride. Barbara returned the caress, then gently removing the coverlet, revealed the sleeping child.

"Felix," was all she said.

Mrs. Terrance failed to notice that the child had been already named and kissed it affectionately.

"Such a darlin', to be sure!" she exclaimed with unrestrained delight. "He's got his grandfather's brown eyes, John. I hope ye'll call him Michael."

Barbara and her husband exchanged glances, but neither spoke. The name "Felix" had been chosen long before the little stranger came, and they had agreed upon "Mary" if the baby should be a girl.

The hour was growing late, and Widow Terrance prepared to go home. Ere doing so, however, she turned to her son, saying, "I'll tell Father McCarthy in the mornin', and he'll be ready for the christenin' when Barbara's strong enough."

Poor Barbara could stand it no longer. This last blow at their plans wounded her sorely, and she turned away to weep.

All unconscious of the cause of the poor mother's tears, Widow Terrance attributed them to weariness, and hurried away.

The drive to his mother's cottage seemed terribly long for John. The widow gave him no opportunity to sing if he had wished to do so. She talked incessantly of the plans she had made for "Michael."

Michael was to be christened by Father McCarthy; Michael was to be a politician—that was what his grandfather wanted to be but he never got the chance; Michael was to be a good member of the Church and win the love of the Blessed Virgin; Michael was to be her own darlin' Michael.

John Terrance heard it all in silence. He had a lively impression of what the thwarting of these plans would mean, and began to dread that unseen power which worketh in divers ways upon kings and beggars; that power which, hundreds of years before, had brought emperors to their knees.

He decided to accede to the wishes of his wife and permit the baptism of their son into the Church of England. Metaphorically, he took off his coat and defied the Church of Rome, but that he was doing so never entered into his head. He saw the darling girl of his heart, with the pinkest and sweetest of all human morsels at her breast, but ignored the agent of His Holiness the Pope who sought the child, and even now stood ready to lay its head upon the breast of the Blessed Virgin.

They had discussed the matter while Barbara rocked Felix to sleep. The young wife had bravely faced the task of settling the question raised by Widow Terrance, and now exercised every art to have her way. It was her first day up, and when John came in from the fields he found her seated in a chair by the window. She was clad in a dainty wrapper, her long, dark tresses falling in glorious

profusion about her shoulders. Her eyes were lustrous, her sweet face a delicate pink, her lips parted with a smile of delight. Felix lay upon her lap, his eyes wide open, a great calm enveloping his little person.

John reached the bedroom door, and stood transfixed. His burly body thrilled with pride.

"Did I ever see such a beautiful picture in all my life?" he cried in a transport of delight.

Barbara raised a flushed face and posed her lips for a kiss, receiving it with such ardor that the silent Felix raised a disturbance at the same time. He blinked at the man who had so rudely burst in upon his infant reverie, and strained and squirmed in his mother's lap.

"And sure my little son's glad to see me, too," said John, touching the soft pink cheeks with his brawny fingers. When Barbara thought John had admired the picture long enough, she began her task in the sweetest and softest of all voices—at least that was John's description of it.

"You know, John, dear, we've decided to call him Felix, and I was thinking that you should tell the rector if you see him down this way. We'll have to have a christening soon."

John looked troubled. He recalled his mother's words during the drive to the cottage.

"Mother wants him called Michael," he said, musingly.

"Your mother was thinking about your father,

John. She said he had his eyes and hair—but not his nose and mouth, thank goodness!" explained Barbara, with a ravishing smile.

"I think she wants him called Michael, girly," went on John, growing thoughtful.

"Ah, now, dear, your own colleen wants him named Felix, and sure ye wouldn't refuse her anything, now would ye?"

When Barbara lapsed into the brogue she was irresistible. She knew her weapon and used it.

"Shure, now, girly, how can I say 'no' to such a charmin' creature as yourself? We'll call him Felix just to plaze ye, and mother must take it as she likes."

He had succumbed to the charms of his wife, and sealed his consent with a kiss.

It was haying time, and John worked early and late in the fields. Thunder-clouds had hung threateningly overhead for two days, but the dreaded storms kept away. A week later the crop was safely in the mow.

"And now, John, you must go to Marysville to buy a cradle," Barbara said with a teasing smile.

"The little chap's growin' so fast we can't keep him in the clothes-basket any longer," cried the happy father.

"And you must get some pink lining for it."

"Shure now, green would be a finer color."

"But he'll look so sweet in pink," protested Barbara.

There were two stores in Marysville where cradles

were kept. John visited both. In the first he found but two specimens of antiquated art. One looked like the hull of a ship, the other resembled something usually found at the undertaker's. Neither would do. The finest in the land was none too good for Felix. In the second store they seemed to know he was coming. There were all sorts of cradles—cradles with hoods and cradles without hoods, cradles of wood and cradles of wicker, cradles on hooks and cradles on rockers.

It took him an hour to make up his mind, but the obliging salesman rescued him from the shoals of indecision by urging the advantages of a very handsome affair on hooks. Its designer was very likely a long-suffering father.

"You see, sir," he said, "it swings itself."

That the young gentleman had not left the realms of veracity was soon made clear. John had the cradle hoisted into his wagon, and began a triumphal tour down Main Street, a playful breeze demonstrating the truth of the salesman's words.

To and fro rocked the cradle. The whole street took an interest in the progress of the wagon. Store-keepers came out to see, and having seen, went in to laugh. Unconscious of it all, John smoked his pipe and drove on.

Widow Terrance was in her garden when he reached the cottage. "My, my, but ye've got a fine cradle there for Michael. How is the darlin'?" she cried, in greeting her son. "Barbara will be a proud

woman these days, I'm thinkin'. Come inside, I have a present for ye to take home."

The widow was excited and showed it by her glistening eyes. She bade John "be sated" while she went into her bedroom. He recalled the little garment he had found her knitting, and thought the present must be that. Should he explain? No, not now. *He* would not give her pain. And while he thus communed, Widow Terrance returned.

"It's very small and will not hurt the darlin'," she said softly. "Hang it round young Michael's neck. May the saints bliss him!"

Her fingers worked nervously to remove the lid of a small box.

"Shure, now, I can't get it open, my hands are so crippled wid rheumatism, John. Do ye take it off."

John fumbled with the lid a moment, then looked upon a silver crucifix. His hands shook, his head grew dizzy. The time had come to speak.

His mother watched him in silence. She was happy. She had given him a present for Michael. Why was he so silent?

John raised his hand and would have given her back the toy-like figure of the crucified Saviour, but she would not take it.

"Whatever is the matter wid ye?" she cried, breaking the silence.

"His name's goin' to be Felix, and he's goin' to be christened in the English Church," he blurted out.

"What! Not goin' to be Michael! Goin' to be

christened by a heretic!" cried the widow, bending forward to look into her son's eyes.

"Is it true what ye tell me, John? Don't say it's true, dearie. Say ye didn't mane it. Say your poor owld mother didn't hear ye right. Spake to me, John," she cried, tearfully, stretching out a crippled hand to lay upon his shoulder. As it touched him he spoke again.

"'Tis true, mother. Barbara girlie wants it that way."

She regarded him for a moment in silence, her eyes like beads of fire, then spoke angrily to the man who had crushed her dreams.

"An' ye a son of Michael Terrance, who went to mass every Sunday and often gave the Church the money he needed for his home. Ye the son of a mother who nearly died when ye were born! Ye tell me now that his name is Felix, and that the blissed saints will never hear his prayers. Bad cess to ye! I'll tell the Father of ye. I'll not rest till ye do what's right. The Holy Church must have him. O! Michael Terrance, ye in Paradise, hear your owld wife as she plades wid yer son!" Tears rolled down the old woman's cheeks, and John, dropping the crucifix to the floor, fled from the cottage.

CHAPTER III.

JOHN DEFIES THE UNSEEN POWER.

JOHN carried the cradle into the house, and stood it on the kitchen table. Barbara's delight was so great it drove from his face all traces of pain left by the scene at the cottage. She admired the design and the man who had the courage to go on such an errand.

"There," cried John in a out thankfulness, "that's the biggest job I've had yet. Heaven be praised, cradles don't wear out."

"And it swings itself," cried Barbara, unaware that a great many people in Marysville had already had an ocular demonstration of the fact.

Felix was awake, and after a pillow had been placed in the cradle his royal highness was laid upon it. He regarded his new surroundings with indifference, until his mother started the swing. Then a smile of sublime contentment flooded his face, and the fond parents knew the cradle was a success.

Where it was to stand was a difficult problem. Near the stove it was likely to be too warm; near the door it was sure to be too cold; over by the eight-day clock it looked nice, but the solemn tick might wake the precious sleeper; near the window seemed to be

just the place, but John must nail up weatherstrips to stop the draughts.

Let Felix sleep to the gentle motion of the cradle, let his dreams be undisturbed, let him take flights into childhood's world of perpetual sunshine, where there is neither darkness nor sorrow nor pain, where joy is king. For lo, there may come a day when a desolating hand is laid upon his young life, and the icy blasts of grief chill his warm blood and scatter in wild confusion the dreams of early years.

"And now, John, we must make arrangements for the christening," said Barbara. "Who shall we have for godmother? He's to have two godfathers, you know. Let me see, there's Mrs. Tawkesbury, dear old soul, she will stand, I am sure; and Mr. Wheeler, he's English Church, too. But who's to be the other godfather? Come, dear, name someone, don't leave it all to me."

"Barbara, girlie, ye're doin' so fine I can't do better than to let you have your own way about it all."

"How would brother Jim do?"

"Fine, he's all right. I'm willin', anyway."

And so it was settled. John was to see Mr. Reid, the rector, and ask him when the church would be open for christening. John was to see the selected godparents.

John began to wish that the baptism of his son Felix was not necessary. The more he heard of the arrangements, the more awesome became the whole matter. He began to catech'se himself. Was the

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difference between the two Churches so very great? His mother seemed to regard his consent to the child being admitted into Barbara's Church as something almost criminal. Was she right? Was he wrong in letting Barbara have her way? What would the priest do? What could he do? Would he try to frighten him into submission by holding pictures of an awful hereafter before him? Why fear him? Had he not braved the frowns of the good man and the imprecations of his mother when he married Barbara? What more could they do? His mother had almost forgiven him for that act. Would she for this? The priest had begun to speak to him again. Would he make another attempt to discipline him into subjection? What if he did? Need he give in? Surely Barbara's love and happiness were worth more than the smile of the priest. If the Protestant religion had made Barbara the good girl she was it couldn't be very wrong. He knew Catholics who went to confession oftener than he did whose names were stained by acts of shame. Barbara, pure, sweet Barbara, could not be far from Christ, and yet the Catholic Church called her an heretic. She was not that. How could she err in faith and live a blameless life? Rome was wrong there, at any rate. If heaven were meant for good people, then Barbara would go there after death. Let the priest denounce him if he liked. Let him be kept in constant fear of the tortures of hell; let his mother scream and threaten. Felix should feel the holy water of the

Protestant Church upon his head; Felix should grow up under the gentle, guiding hand of Barbara.

John arranged everything to please his wife. Mrs. Tawkesbury and Mr. Wheeler had been more than delighted to stand sponsors, and Uncle Jim regarded the invitation as a great honor. The rector of St. Paul's, Marysville, would be at the church at five o'clock on the third Sunday of the month and would be glad to receive the child into the fold. This good man, who had officiated at their marriage after some hesitation, felt no hesitancy now in admitting the child of the union into the living Church.

"It is unfortunate that these people are of different faith, my dear," he confided to his wife after Barbara's brother had called, "but," he went on more cheerfully, "young Mrs. Terrance appears to be a very good and sensible woman and I am sure will bring the child up in the fear of God. The godparents are respectable people and I have no doubt their interest in the child's welfare will be sincere. I hope all will be well." Having thus spoken, the devout man buried himself deeply in a volume dealing with the external and internal evidences of Biblical truths.

In the interval during which arrangements were being made for the christening, Father McCarthy called at the cottage of Widow Terrance and found her in a strange humor. He heard the story of John's last visit, and during the telling moved his shaven lips in and out in an extraordinary manner

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To this physical exercise he added an occasional motion of his head. Sometimes it went up, sometimes down; sometimes it just swung to and fro like the pendulum of a very massive and thoughtful clock.

"Can't ye stop it, Father?" asked the widow in despairing tones.

If she had been referring to the pendulum-like action of his head, the answer must have been in the negative. It kept on moving to and fro.

"I must see him. Truly, he is a wayward son," answered the priest, meditatively.

"The boy should be called Michael and he should be taken into the Church. Can't ye frighten his father into doin' what's right?" asked the troubled old woman.

"It is not the office of a priest of the Holy Church to compel a man to do what is right, Mrs. Terrance, but we *may ask* him what his conscience says upon the subject," replied the priest quietly. "I will see him."

Two days later Father McCarthy met John, who was doing his day of statute labor. They talked for some time before the subject of the christening was opened. John knew what was coming and rallied his forces.

"Your mother tells me the child is to be called Felix, and baptized into your wife's Church," began the priest in his kindly manner.

"Yes, Father," said John gravely.

"Do you think you are doing right, my son?"

"I love Barbara, Father. She is the best wife in the world and wants it that way. I don't think I'm doin' wrong."

Father McCarthy had a pair of very kind eyes, reflecting a nature that had won for him the unstinted esteem of Protestant and Catholic alike, and he turned those eyes upon the man before him. Laying a hand gently on John's coat sleeve he said solemnly, "be sure that your conscience acquits you, my son."

The following Sunday, being "the third Sunday of the month," John drove Barbara and Felix over to the church. Jim and his wife, Hannah, had gone round another way, and their buggy was at the vestry door when the Terrances arrived. Bill Wheeler brought his wife in a double-seater, and Mr. and Mrs. Tawkesbury sat behind. Mr. Tawkesbury, postmaster and storekeeper, came for the sole purpose of shedding lustre on the ceremony, and giving it an importance he thought it could not otherwise possess. As there was nobody in that little company inclined to dispute with Mr. Tawkesbury upon the matter, that very pompous gentleman cherished this hallucination alone.

The Rev. Haslem Reid, M.A., was waiting at the vestry door, and after shaking hands all round asked them to be seated in the church while he prepared himself for the part he was to take in the administration of the solemn sacrament of baptism.

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"I'm goin' to walk around out here," said John, in reply to a questioning look from his wife.

"All right, dear, I guess we won't be long," she said.

The behavior of Felix was beyond criticism. He was sound asleep when carried into the ivy-clad old church, and remained so until the end of the service. He heard nothing of the vows being made on his behalf, and was oblivious to the warning that he was to "renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh." He had apparently thought the matter over on the road and come to the conclusion that the development of his character was going to be in safe hands.

Mr. Tawkesbury took a magnificent interest in the service, but as he had left his reading-glasses at home he failed to notice that his prayerbook was upside down. The godmother was quite clear in announcing her renunciations on behalf of Felix, and Jim King informed himself privately that if Mrs. Tawkesbury and Bill Wheeler did their duty there would not be much left for him to do.

At the request of the rector they sang the baptismal hymn:

"Within the Church's sacred fold,
By holy sacrament enroll'd,
Another lamb we lay;
An heir before of sin and shame,
Now in the Holy Triune Name
His guilt is wash'd away.

"O loving Father, Thee we pray,
Look on this babe new-born to-day,
Thine own adopted child;
An angel guard do Thou bestow
To lead him in Thy paths below,
And guide him through the wild."

Jim had a good voice and the women knew the tune. At the conclusion of a choral effect the like of which had never before been heard in St. Paul's, or any other church, the service came to an end.

John had grown tired waiting, and was asleep with a straw in his mouth. Jim woke him up. "We've got him christened," he cried.

"Good," answered John.

The following week presents of all kinds were brought to the Terrance homestead and laid at the feet of Felix. Every one was a tribute to the good character of John and Barbara, and an earnest of the goodwill felt by all towards them. Jim King brought a five-dollar gold piece, and Mrs. Tawkesbury gave her godson a Bible. Bill Wheeler was a poor man, but, not to be outdone, he carried over a young apple tree he had raised. Bill was a religious man and found food for thought while planting the sapling. Resting his spade on the newly-turned earth, he mentioned the name Felix. Then, removing his hat, and pointing to the tree, said:

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the water-side, that will bring forth his fruit in due season. His leaf also shall not wither, and look, whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper."

CHAPTER IV.

A BRAVE SON DEFENDS FATHER.

"He makes no friend who never makes a foe."

—*Lancelot and Elaine.*

It is a pleasant task to record the steady growth in wisdom and in strength of the lad Felix. His first five years differed in no particular way from the same period in the lives of other little boys; although he quickly displayed a willingness to conform to discipline. In this he differed greatly from the majority of children.

At five years of age he had mastered the alphabet, and with some aid from his mother could print two very eloquent sentences. The first was clearly a product of the heart; the second looked as if he had developed a decided line of thought. He always wrote them in the same order, numbering them "1" and "2":

"1.—I love mamma.

"2.—I don't want to be a farmer."

One glance at Barbara would explain what he meant by the first sentence; but what he had observed that made the second leave his pencil it was not easy to divine; nor did he ever explain, probably thinking that as his reasons were his own he intended to keep them.

John was in the fields the livelong day, and Barbara was the boy's constant companion. The society of children of that age was only obtainable at irregular intervals. Mrs. Timothy Seede brought her beloved "Arty" over to Hillcrest Farm occasionally, but always left with the conviction that Felix Terrence was not at all like other little boys, and would very likely come to a bad end. This opinion was founded upon the custom of Felix to treat Arty as if he were years younger than himself. If, during their play, the Seedling should manifest a spirit of unfairness, or an inclination to be unreasonably obstinate, Felix would take hold of him in a very quiet but very determined manner, and sit him in a corner. This was always done with such decision that the chastened Seede stayed there until released. The proceeding was never offensive, and appeared to be nothing more than the natural triumph of a well balanced mind over one inclined to wobble.

Gabriel Tawkesbury, famous for his eloquence and peppery temper, was always a source of interest to Felix, who often accompanied his mother to that great man's store; and he would sit on the counter and listen intently to the orator, with wide open eyes, and an expression on his thoughtful little face which seemed to say, "this remarkable gentleman explains matters so exhaustively, he must regard us all as very silly people."

During one of Gabriel's longest speeches, Felix nodded his head in drowsiness, and suddenly

tumbled off the counter. The bump stunned him. When he opened his eyes his mother asked him how he came to fall. The little boy did not answer at once, but when he did, he said quietly, "I think he made me tired."

The old storekeeper heard the remark, and for a moment looked as if he would like to have the child on a platter at his next meal. On second thought he appeared to change his mind, and handed the young critic a sample of his best candy.

"That's a wise boy," he remarked to Mrs. Terrence.

John used to sing as he worked in the fields, and Felix would sit on a fence near by. He liked to hear the songs his father sang, the songs of long ago, filled with memories sad and sweet—songs that told of pining hearts and dreams of home, of birds and flowers in woodland dell, of moonbeams soft and whispered love, of golden sunset and twilight hour, of evening dew and starry night, of tender vows and lingering touch.

When the boy was six, he received his first impression of a Sunday School. Two of the neighbors' children came over and asked if they might take Felix with them to the Presbyterian mission, then held in the schoolhouse; and Barbara consented. He was put into the infant class and heard the story of the Good Samaritan. When the teacher asked the children which of them had seen a Samaritan no one answered.

"I've seen a priest," volunteered Felix, anxious to let the young lady know that he had seen some one referred to in the story.

She smiled, and explained that the priest in the story was not a very good man—he was not kind.

"I've seen Father McCarthy, too," cried young "Limpy" Budd, "and he's a kind man. When Willie Howsey got lost in the woods one time, Father McCarthy stayed out all night in the rain helpin' to find him. Then they lost him, an' next morning my papa found him lying in a hole with a sprained ankle, and Willie was near him covered over with his coat so that he couldn't get wet. Gee, I guess he's a kind man."

When he reached home Felix gave his mother an extraordinary report of the lesson. Looming large in his mind was the conduct of the priest, and he likened him to small boys, "because he didn't want to wash himself."

The fact that the priest avoided touching the "certain man" because he feared defilement, had not been made clear enough. He had numerous excuses for the Levite having merely "looked on him and passed by on the other side." "P'raps he thought that if he stayed there the robbers would get him too; or he might have been in a hurry to get to lodge—that's the way Mr. Tawkesbury often was; he wouldn't stay to serve a customer if he thought he was goin' to be late for lodge." The conduct of the Samaritan met with his unqualified approval.

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The "little red schoolhouse" stood on the Marysville road, about a mile and a half from Hillcrest Farm, and was sheltered on three sides by tall poplar trees. A wooden pump was the only ornament in the gravel playground. In the summer its handle never rested; in the winter the entire affair froze up, and drinking water had to be brought to the school in pails.

The teacher, Miss Alice Brainley, labored industriously, and received, in addition to a daily supply of criticism, three hundred dollars a year.

At seven years of age Felix went to school. His mother had given him a good grounding in the first book, and it was with boundless delight he told her he had been put into the second class.

On his third day there he came home in thoughtful mood and watched for an opportunity to speak to his mother in private. When it came Barbara was hanging a text in his bedroom. He watched her in silence for a time.

"What's a Mick, mamma?" he asked, a slight flush on his face.

The text Barbara had just nailed up was one of the Beatitudes—"Blessed are the peacemakers"—and she turned from it to her son. She too had blushed a deep red.

"What makes you ask that question, Felix?" she demanded, her heart thumping like a sledgehammer.

The boy saw his mother's confusion. He would have suffered rather than give her pain, but he must answer.

" 'Snoopy' Mutch called papa that."

"And what did you say to him, dearie?" asked Barbara, glancing at the text.

"Nothin'. I didn't know what it meant."

Barbara told him in her own quiet way that it was a name applied to people who attended Father McCarthy's church; that it was only rude people who used it.

Felix heard his mother's explanation in silence, and went downstairs without looking at the text.

Two days later, during recess at the school, the teacher heard a piercing shriek from someone at the back of the building and ran out to find the cause.

Lying prone upon the ground, apparently in the first stage of strangulation, was "Snoopy" Mutch. Sitting on his chest, his hands clasped tightly about his victim's neck, was Felix, his face red with anger, his teeth tightly set.

Summoning all the strength she possessed, the girl seized Felix, and dragged him off the prostrate "Snoopy," who, when he found he could again breathe freely, jumped up and ran away. Felix and the teacher faced each other, both panting for breath. His short brown curls had been tumbled into wild disorder and would have driven a painter into a frenzy of delight.

"Why did you do that?" demanded the girl angrily. "You might have killed him."

The boy displayed no fear, and answered without a flinch, "He called my papa a Mick."

When nine years of age Felix had to submit his

sturdy young body to the indignity of measles, and it was during this season set apart in the career of our hero for the mortification of the flesh, that word was brought to John that his mother was ill and wished to see him.

"I wish I could go with you, John," said Barbara, while she packed a basket with butter and eggs and other good things her considerate heart told her an invalid might enjoy.

Widow Terrance was a very sick woman, and received her son in her bedroom. A neighbor performed the offices of nurse.

John stooped to kiss his mother.

"I'm glad ye came to see me, John," she told him. "I'm afeared I'm goin' to lave this wurld in a little while. But, praise be to the blissid saints, I'm riddy to die. The Father was in to see me yisterday."

The voice of the sufferer was weak. She spoke with an effort which brought shadows of pain to her white face. John talked soothingly to her. Barbara, he explained, did not come because of Felix's sickness. His mother turned uneasily when she heard this.

"I'm sorry they're not in the faith," she said with a sudden start. "John, how often do ye go to see the praste?"

The dreaded question was hurled at him like a javelin. Its swiftness had caught him off his guard.

"About twice a year, mother. I went to mass last Easter."

Her beads were held tightly in her hand; the

treasured crucifix stood near the medicine bottles; an old and thumbsoiled "Key of Heaven" lay upon the coverlet.

"Oh, John, John," cried the old woman in warning tones, "ye'll lose yer sowl in hell, sure as God's in hiven!"

"Don't say that, mother. It can't make so much difference. Oh, God, I hate to see you feel so bad about it," he said.

John went to the bedside and laid a hand gently on the sufferer's head, stroking it fondly. He tried to tell her he was not unfilial, not wickedly indifferent to the Church. Besides, did not Barbara worship in another place and was she not a noble, loving wife?

His mother, feeble as she was, thrust his hand from her and uttered a low moan.

"O Mother of God," she cried in a quivering voice, "bring him back, bring him back for the sake of his poor old mother that loves his sowl! Till him 'tis the hand of the Evil Wan himself that kapes him away. O Jesus, have mercy on us!"

It sounded like the despairing wail of a heart making a last stand against heavier forces. Tears rolled down the sunken cheeks, a tremor of emotion shook the weakened body.

John could stand it no longer; his was no nature to resist the battering-rams of an agonizing cry like that. He seized the hand that held the beads, and, pressing it gently between his own bade his mother grieve no more.

"I'll go to the priest to-morrow," he said huskily.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE AT THE RECTORY—A DIGRESSION.

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, Marysville, stood in a corner of that quiet town, looking for all the world like the ivy-mantled village church of Stoke Pogis, which inspired Gray to give the world his immortal elegy.

It was ever bathed in a blessed calm. Inscribed above the Gothic entrance were the words "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

The invitation suited the dear old place so well that men and women would sit in its grounds, away from the harsh things of life, and enjoy that rest.

The rectory, a quiet, red brick house, with green shutters, and an old country garden, stood on the opposite side of the road, a lichgate adding to the picturesqueness of its appearance.

The Rev. Haslem Reid, M.A., preserved an English atmosphere in his church and its organizations. A proposal to "enrich the Prayer Book" would have caused him to shudder at what he would have termed "the audacity of the Canadian clergy."

To him Presbyterian and Methodist and Baptist ministers were nonconformists, dissenters. He was not a ritualist, but often bemoaned the parsimony and

puritanism of the present age which debarred the use of vestments more elaborate than the surplice. No doubt the alb would have met with his unqualified approval and he would have justified its use by a reference to something which happened in A.D. 1237.

His learning was deep and his language in the pulpit abundant. Everything he said was justified by authority. His bigotry, if bigotry it was, could be excused by an authority.

To-day the rector stood in his small but well stored library. He had just finished a plain but satisfying dinner. His face bore a serene look, a ray of sunshine rested upon his silver hair.

It is said that reading makes a full man. This old gentleman could have told you that eating a good dinner produced a similar effect.

His wife entered without warning, which made him jump.

"Oh, my dear," he exclaimed, "you startled me."

Mrs. Reid was crushed into an humble and contrite state.

"Really, Haslem, I am very sorry. I coughed outside the door."

The startled gentleman had not heard the cough, besides, there was nothing in any of the very ponderous volumes at his hand to justify the assumption that a cough was equivalent to a knock. However, the matter could now be dismissed, and the rector of St. Paul's put out a metaphorical hand and drew

back the serene look that had made a sudden bolt for liberty.

"Sit down, my dear, sit down," he said with great politeness.

Mrs. Reid sat down and waited.

"I have written to the Bishop telling him that I must really have some help," he began. "His lordship will probably give the matter his serious consideration and leave me exactly as I am. It is most unfortunate that I have been kept so many years in this area of intellectual starvation. Of course, there are some nice folk, and some exceedingly good folk, in the parish. I called at Hillcrest Farm to-day, my dear, and found that the Terrance child had measles. Needless to say I did not go in."

"They seem to get along very well," ventured Mrs. Reid, thinking of John and Barbara.

"I confess I have little faith in mixed marriages," said the Rector. "They are injudicious, and liable at any time to terminate in disaster. To-day too little thought is given by men and women ere they unite in matrimony. I wish it were otherwise. Bishop Taylor said the first blessing God gave to man was society, and that society was a marriage, and that marriage was confederated by God Himself, and hallowed by a blessing.

"The first miracle that Jesus Christ ever performed was to do honor to a wedding, which He graced with His presence and supplied with part of its provision. But then with how much caution

and discretion ought this union to be formed, for they who enter into the state of matrimony cast a die of the greatest contingency, and yet of the greatest interest in the world, next to the last throw for eternity. Life or death, felicity or a lasting sorrow, are in the power of marriage. Mixed marriages are unwise. The risk that is run is greater than is dreamed of—it has a subtle mystery.

“There can be no unrestricted exchange of thought. The Protestant will feel that his or her private affairs belong to a third party—the priest.

“This means the growth and development of secrecy, at first in trifling matters only, later, in more important things, until the inner lives of the man and woman become as divided as the poles. How small a thing would then be necessary to shatter for ever the peace of the home! It is of vital importance that between man and wife there be a constantly increasing sympathy. Dissimilarity even in minor matters is often responsible for the annihilation of conjugal felicity.

“If there are children to the marriage, and the boys follow in the faith of their father, and the girls in that of their mother, there must inevitably be more division. How can the children, who from infancy take sides in religion, continue to live in the sweet fellowship so essential to the maintenance of brotherly and sisterly love? How can the father and mother unite in anxiety for the spiritual welfare of their children when concern in their own spiritual

affairs runs in opposite directions? Unless the affection of both parents for their children is concentrated upon objects of eternal consequence their love is wasted.

"There is a still more serious side to the matter. Generally, when the man is the Protestant and the wife a consistent Catholic, he stops going to Church altogether. In such cases peace is fairly well preserved, but at what an awful cost. Why should a man voluntarily place himself in such a position that he cannot partake of those means of grace, or of salvation offered by the Protestant Church?

"It is the duty of a man to rule in his own house. How frail a thing must be the authority of a man who puts his religion into a drawer that he might keep the peace! Discipline comes to an end and domestic anarchy begins.

"From whatever standpoint they are regarded, mixed marriages endanger home life and are to be deplored."

Mrs. Reid never debated with her husband. He knew all things; she enough to venture no opinions.

"Did you see Mrs. Leafy to-day, Haslem?" asked his wife by way of diversion.

"No, I believe there has been an addition to the family."

"Good gracious! Why, how many is that?"

"Quite ten, I believe."

"Did you see anything of that strange old creature, Maria Joy?"

"I did. She is as sad as ever. I learned from a person in another house that she is possessed of the idea that the man she refused to marry comes into her bedroom at night. If I remember rightly my informant said that the alarmed creature retires behind a screen."

Three days later the rector received a letter from the Bishop telling him that a curate would be sent at once.

"Let me assure you, my dear Mr. Reid," ran the communication, "of my personal regret that you have been compelled to labor so long in that great field of yours unassisted. But I am comforted when I remember how splendidly you have done your work, how unflinchingly you have faced the difficulties which beset the path of every clergyman, but more especially him whom God hath chosen to work in a rural district. For you, my dear Mr. Reid, it must have been doubly hard. My chaplain was saying only the other day that your commentaries upon the Book of Job were spoken of most highly at a recent meeting of Church dignitaries.

"Your new man is quite young. He is English; the younger son of an aristocratic family. He is not at all bumptious, in fact, is rather inclined to underestimate himself. I believe he took high honors at Oxford, so that you will have a companion of some learning and culture.

"Work him like a horse. He is physically strong. When he has won his spurs, and has become thor-

oughly seasoned by wind and hail storms and all night battles in snowdrifts, we shall bring him into the city for a few weeks, preliminary to giving him a prairie parish with real work to do.

"Please convey my kindest regards to Mrs. Reid."

The serenity of the rector fled. He called his wife. The letter made the little lady cry. She really could not tell why. It was very silly of her, she said, she had not had a good cry for a long time, and this was just the sort of cry she enjoyed.

"I am so glad, Haslem," she said, at last.

On the following day there was bustle at the Rectory, but it failed to affect the Rev. Haslem Reid, M.A., whose life's motto seemed to be, "I came quietly into the world; I have lived quietly in the world; and I hope to pass quietly out of the world." Mrs. Reid, whose privilege it had been for a great many years to be a lady, dress like a lady, entertain like a lady, and dispense charity like a lady, on her husband's slender stipend, was now in the throes of preparation for the coming of the curate.

To-day, she had beaten a carpet, washed the spare bedroom floor, stretched a pair of curtains, cooked dinner, dusted the downstairs and given mortal offence to Mrs. Brierly Beets because she hurried her away. After making her ninth trip to the front door, the active little woman found time to emit a small sigh, and whisper to herself, "It could be worse, of course. Haslem has no telephone."

The rector had once found her beating a carpet,

and had offered to help. He "never dreamed that a fabric, apparently so clean, could contain so much dirt." There was food for reflection in that, was there not? Did not that carpet, with its smiling surface and corrupting interior, represent a deceitful man? Surely.

While he thus moralized his wife wielded the cane, the result being that by the time a complete set of deductions, analogies and inferences had been drawn, the carpet was half done.

"But I allowed him to help me," wrote Mrs. Reid to her sister in Toronto, "and with awful results. The next day his body ached all over, his eyes swam, the roof of his head was in danger of coming off, and his poor hands were so blistered he was unable to hold a pen."

"My dear, he is coming on the Grand Trunk, which is usually supposed to arrive at six-thirty, but which has a little peculiarity of strolling in between eight and nine o'clock. I shall not, therefore, go to the station till I see Blinks pass my study window, on his way to prayer-meeting at the Methodist Church," announced the rector, when his wife asked at what hour the curate would arrive.

"His room is quite ready, Haslem; I do hope he will be nice."

"Young Englishmen of education and culture are either exceedingly nice or abominably intolerable," answered the rector. But the little woman continued to speculate.

"He will find our bed linen a little old," she went on; "and I have been obliged to put our water jug into his room. It almost matches his basin."

"Really, my dear, I am sorry we are not rich enough to provide better things for him; but if he is a gentleman he will make the best of what we have, and will treat us as if we were giving him regal accommodation."

Mrs. Reid was sure she hoped so, but her anxiety was very great, and she was just on the verge of dissolving into tears when the bell rang.

"A telegram, dear," she said, coming into the room again. "Whatever can it mean? Oh, I am so afraid something serious has happened. Do open it quickly."

Without losing that blessed serenity which always lay like a sunlit cloak of snow upon him, the rector opened the envelope and read aloud:

"Train ditched fifteen miles from Marysville. Uninjured. Will walk."

"LLOYD."

"I am rather surprised that the Grand Trunk trains don't climb telegraph poles occasionally, by way of diversion," remarked the rector, as he handed the message to his wife.

"He doesn't say how many were hurt, or how serious the accident was."

"I noted the omission, my dear. He is very likely

a little unnerved, and unable to view the incident in a calm manner."

"And such a walk! Fifteen miles! Why, he'll never do it. Oh, dear, dear, what a terrible thing!"

"English people are great walkers."

"And we shall spend such an anxious, watchful night, wondering and wondering when he will arrive. I shall not sleep a wink, I know. I shall leave the light in the hall. It is so very unpleasant to approach a dark house, when you expect to be welcomed."

A noise, which sounded like the snort of a rhinoceros, alarmed them both, although in different ways. Mrs. Reid gave a violent start, and the rector's glasses jumped off his nose.

She made a dart for the window.

"Why, it's Mr. Hogan, the hotel-keeper, in his new run-about; and there's a young man with him," she cried, excitedly.

The door bell rang.

"Mrs. Reid, I believe. How do you do? That gentleman picked me up just after the train left the rails, and insisted on driving me here. It's awfully good of him. He wouldn't wait for me to introduce him. He said you knew him. My baggage will come on to-morrow, I presume."

Mrs. Reid saw a tall, good-looking, clean shaven young man, in a clerical suit, and heard his address before she could exhibit any signs of animation. Upon recovery she welcomed him with that sort of enthusiasm with which one would be likely to wel-

come a ghost. She guided him into the study, and nervously told her husband she believed this was Mr. Lloyd, the curate, and looking as if she had fears of his evaporating at any moment.

"I assure you I really am," laughed the new arrival as he gripped the hand of the rector.

"Welcome, sir. I thought there would be some way out of the difficulty," returned the old gentleman, calmly.

CHAPTER VI.

"SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED."

"MR. LLOYD is a young man of great promise. I have sounded him in theology and find him absolutely orthodox. He talks and acts like a man consecrated from birth to a holy life," said the rector to his wife about a month after the arrival of the curate, Rev. David Lloyd, B.A. (Oxon.).

"He is a beautiful man in the house," interpolated Mrs. Reid, enthusiastically.

"His mind is quite lofty; he has some eloquence; possesses sound creative powers, and is hungry for work," proceeded the observant commentator. "I don't wish to check his wonderful ardor, because I think it is infectious and may do good. He declares that the people in this parish are charming—I think that is the word he used."

"He hasn't met Mrs. Mutch, has he?" asked Mrs. Reid, significantly.

The rector lifted his hands, as if thrusting back a goblin.

"Oh, my dear; that awful woman," he said in horror. "No, they have not met; they will shortly, though. He is going to hold a mission service once a month in Chippendale."

On the morning after his arrival in the hotel-keeper's auto, the curate jumped right in to work. He began by going over to Hogan's hotel, to repeat his thanks for the ride into Marysville. Mr. Hogan was in the bar. A young man in the office offered to call him out, when he saw the clerical suit, but the curate said, "No, thanks; I'll go in to see him. I suppose he is very busy serving drinks. The day is warm, is it not?"

His appearance in the bar caused the thirsty ones to look around in amazement. The clerk placed himself behind a green curtain for the sake of seeing what sort of drink the parson took; and the bartender, keen after business, performed a sort of slide over to where the curate stood to ask him what he would have. When he realized his mistake, and had called Mr. Hogan, he passed behind the curtain to tell the clerk the joke, but found that gentleman already in one of the first stages of what he afterwards called a "fit."

"I felt I must thank you again for your kindness in saving me that long walk, Mr. Hogan," said the curate, extending a hand.

Mr. Hogan assured him that a little thing like that was nothing; he was glad he had been around at the time. Any time he was on the road and needed a lift, why just let him "flag" him and he'd shut off the "smell" and "yank" him on board.

When the Rev. David Lloyd, B.A., left the bar, the hotel proprietor turned to his curious customers.

"Say, boys," he said, "there's a guy that's made of good stuff. He'll come up with the goods every time. There's no molly-coddle snicker on his dial; it tells the right time every trip. He's the new preacher over at St. Paul's, and if he shoots off to the bunch in church the same as he did in the machine to me, why hang me if I don't drop in some night and hear him."

To make use of an extract from the eloquent Hogan's discourse on the physical attractions and moral qualities of a young priest in the church militant, let us say that the curate "yanked" himself back to the rectory, and delved at once into plans for the rejuvenation of the parish of St. Paul's, Marysville, which, in point of area, was the largest in the diocese. He suggested the appointment of two district visitors, at least one scripture reader for very sick people, a Bible class for men, and a mission service and Sunday School in or near Chippendale. The rector raised no objection to the proposals, and suggested the names of people his assistant might call upon for help.

A month later the new offices were filled and the mission in Chippendale opened. At first this consisted only of one morning service, and Sunday School each month. The school-house was used as a church.

"We're goin' to have a real old country mothers' meetin'," said Mrs. Bleeney on getting home from the first service. "Mr. Lloyd wants us to meet him at the school next Tuesday afternoon, and to bring

some cake and sewin'. He wants us to make things to send to the Indians."

It cannot be said that the first "Mothers' Meeting" was an out-and-out success. To begin with, there were only five "mothers" present, and the curate, but as he did not, for obvious reasons, qualify under that head, he should not be counted. The five maternal persons present were: Mrs. Mutch, Mrs. Tawkesbury, Mrs. Higgenslide, Mrs. Seede, and Mrs. Wheeler.

In his address of welcome the curate said:

"I am aware that this is something new for Chipendale. This is an age of newness, and the mothers of this district should combine to make these meetings successful.

"I want you to feel that in meeting here once a month to make things for the heathen you are doing very valuable work, a work of the finest charity.

"I quite realize, ladies, that the novelty of such gatherings will possibly attract a few who will take only a theoretical interest in the work; but if you bury your heads in your labors and refuse to engage in distracting matters, such members will quietly drop out."

When the curate referred to people who take only a theoretical interest in work for others, Mrs. Tawkesbury looked over at Mrs. Mutch, but as that lady was engaged in looking over at Mrs. Higgenslide she failed to note the look; and as Mrs. Higgenslide was at that identical moment absorbed in the general appearance of Mrs. Wheeler, she too missed a chance of feeling that she was observed; and strange to say,

just when Mrs. Wheeler might have been alive to the scrutiny of Mrs. Higgenslide, she was looking out of the window.

"In conclusion, ladies," the curate said, in his good-natured way, "let your motto be work, work, work."

When he left them, the real work of the afternoon began by Mrs. Mutch saying that it appeared to her that there were a number of lazy women in Chippendale who might be asked to attend the meetings. Mrs. Liggs and Mrs. Skell were mothers who did nothing all afternoon but sit on the verandah and watch who went by; and as for Mrs. Brown, she had got a hired girl now from Toronto, and wouldn't do a thing.

"I have seen her asleep by the hour in her hammock," added Mrs. Seede.

"And as for Mrs. Skell," chimed in Mrs. Higgenslide, "she gets those cheap novels from Tawkesbury's store, and can't get away from them."

"I don't think Mr. Tawkesbury keeps cheap novels," protested that good man's wife.

"I know he does," retorted the redoubtable Mrs. Higgenslide.

"I think the school teacher might be asked to stay on our meeting days. She has precious little to do. Goodness knows she gets her money easy enough," grumbled Mrs. Mutch. "Why, our little Willie came home the other day and told us she had a mirror tacked on the inside of her desk lid, and was forever lifting it up to see herself."

"She's a very conceited girl; don't you think so?" Mrs. Seede asked Mrs. Tawkesbury.

"She never struck me that way," was the gentle reply.

"It seems to me nothing wrong about people ever strikes you," snapped Mrs. Mutch.

"Then there's Mrs. Terrance. I suppose her Roman Catholic husband wouldn't let her come," said Mrs. Higgenslide.

"I don't think that it is a very nice thing to say. John Terrance is one of the best men we have in the district, and would never do anything to stop his wife if she wished to come," came in reproving tones from Mrs. Wheeler. "I'm not going to sit here and listen to any more slander. If we meet to work let us work—not gossip. I think we have begun in a very poor way to do anything for the Indians."

"Preacher," shot back Mrs. Mutch.

"No, I'm not preaching," returned the plucky Mrs. Wheeler. "I like a little chat about other people, sometimes, but I try not to hurt their feelings. Anyway, this is no time for even innocent gossip. I'm going home."

Four other ladies arose at the same time, and said, "So am I."

When the enthusiastic curate dropped out of his buggy an hour later to see how things had gone, he found the door locked. Going to an open window, he looked in.

"Something must have happened," he mused.

CHAPTER VII.

A JUBILEE OF HAPPINESS.

'O happy love, where love like this is found!
O heart-felt raptures! Bliss beyond compare!
We need much this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me thus declare—
If heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving pair,
In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milkwhite thorn that scents the ev'ning gale."

—*The Cotter's Saturday Night.*

JOHN and Barbara were sitting on the vine-clad verandah of Hillcrest Farm, resting after the labors of the day; and Felix, worn out by the thousand and one things a boy of twelve can accomplish in twenty-four hours, was sound asleep in his little bedroom, dreaming, dreaming, dreaming.

Ah, Felix! live on in thy wild dreams, for is coming when the castles thou hast built will be stormed by an enemy more powerful than the giant of thy visions, more deadly than the specters thou hast met in thy woodland journeys.

"Well, Barbara, girlie, the crops are all in. It has been a good year," said John in tones of satisfaction. As he spoke he laid his hand upon a rounded shoulder, and looked into the radiant face of the woman beside him.

"I was thinking," said Barbara, returning the look of admiration, "that 'tis just thirteen years to-night since our wedding. Do you remember how we drove home in the moonlight, and how you let the old horse have his own way, and how you kissed me every now and then?"

He looked fondly into the happy face and saw that his wife's eyes were filled with tears. He took her hand.

"See how Barbara! I don't remember anything at all," he said. "You are the girl to make up all these things about me, but sure, I remember that everything went wrong till I got you."

He turned her head away to hide the blushes that suffused her sun-kissed cheeks, and deep down in her young heart thanked God for giving her a husband of so fine a make, and a little son to bless them.

She turned to him again.

"Oh, John, I'm so happy to-night! The years seem to have passed so quickly since Mr. Mid took our hands and said in that solemn voice of his, 'Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.'"

He took her in his arms and held her for a moment pressed closely to him.

"My own little wife," he said earnestly, "sure now I'm just as pleased as yourself about it all."

"O Father all creating,
Whose wisdom, love, and power,
First bound two lives together
In Eden's primal hour,

To-day to these Thy children
Thine earliest gifts renew,—
A home by Thee made happy,
A love by Thee kept true."

John Terrance was not given to demonstration. He lived for his wife, and found time occasionally to take part in a scene similar to that we have just described. He learned the lesson of devotion from his father, who, while tutoring him one day, removed his cutty pipe, and looking his son full in the eye, said: "Me bhoy, whin ye can't go up to yer woife whoile she's mindin' the holes in yer socks and give her a kiss on the mouth and till her she's the swatest woman in the wurld, it's time ye packed yer grip and got out." Then with a sly wink he added, "Oi don't know that ye've always got to mane what ye say, but it kapes thim happy, and kapin' a woman happy is wan av the greatest privileges God ivver gave to man."

John had never doubted the truth of his grand old sire's teaching, and in his own way had faithfully carried out the precept.

Felix loved his mother with an intensity which kept them closely together. His affection for his father seemed a different thing. He admired and obeyed him; and, as we have already seen, was ready to strangle a boy who would dare to insult him. He believed his father to be the "smartest" farmer in Chippendale, and had once knocked down a lad two years older than himself for saying that Hillcrest

Farm couldn't be properly worked by one man. But there was no heart communion between father and son. Religion may have had something to do with it. Young as he was, Felix understood that his father and mother held different views about worship, and that once a year John Terrance left his wife, to pour the secrets of his heart into the ears of a priest. The boy knew that the Jesus whom the Rev. Haslem Reid, M.A., talked about was the same Jesus whose maltreated body appeared on the wooden crucifix he had found one day while rummaging in a drawer. He knew that religion was rarely referred to when his father was present; he knew there was a gulf somewhere, but his boyish mind failed to understand what it was, or why it was there at all.

Again, he could not quite understand his mother's love for his father. He understood his own for her, and knew that it carried with it a complete surrender of self and an unreserved bestowal of confidence. He told Barbara everything he did and everything he thought. When she explained anything to him, or gave him advice, he heard her with absolute faith in her judgment. When she told him he was wrong, he did not rest until he had righted himself in her eyes, and this sometimes entailed a chastisement of spirit from which a grown man might have shrunk.

Once, he had hurled a stone at a cat that was carrying off a canary, and the missile crashed through a window in Gabriel Tawkesbury's store. Felix knew Gabriel, and dreaded an avalanche of anger, so he

ran away. Before he went to bed that night, he told his mother what had happened. She at once informed him he must go into the lion's den, tell him what he had done and ask forgiveness. The only sign of flinching he displayed was when he added a line to his evening prayer. "Please God, don't let him get too mad," it ran.

At school, the boy moved up from class to class without a break. His teacher admired him because he had brains; in a letter to a friend of hers, she said that if Felix were ten years older, she would make love to him.

"He has beautiful Irish eyes, and a head of hair I just love to run my fingers through; but when he is angry he is awful and looks like an avenging angel. I am sure he will do something terrible or something great one day," concluded the letter.

These exhibitions of wrath were rare, and were always found to have some justification. The boys feared him, the girls loved him. He liked to wander in the woods, and he knew the calls of birds, the habits of animals, the names of insects, and the peculiarities of plants.

Felix regarded Jesus as the most wonderful man who ever lived, because He could stagger up the hill to Calvary, howled at, reviled and ridiculed, without a murmur. The desertion by His disciples he thought of with contempt, because he did not understand.

"I would have got a sword, mamma," he told Barbara one day, "and fought for Jesus until I was killed."

Barbara explained that Peter had drawn a sword in the garden, and would have fought for his Master, but that Jesus bade the hot-headed disciple put it away.

"That's what I can't understand, mamma," he answered. "Jesus should have brought a big army of angels down from heaven, and shown His enemies that He was a king, by killing everybody who was against Him."

The boy's theology startled his mother, but she curbed him into reason by telling the story of Redemption. After it was over they sang a children's hymn:

"Saviour, teach me day by day,
Love's sweet lesson to obey.
Sweeter lesson cannot be,
Loving Him who first loved me."

John entered the house during the singing, and stood in silence until it was ended.

CHAPTER VIII.

REV. DAVID LLOYD, B.A. (OXON.), A HERO.

THE curate was driving into Chippendale behind the rector's old horse, Clericus, and pondering over his work in the parish. The day was in the last week of October, and the cool air got into his nostrils and filled his mind with active thoughts. He sighed and wished it would have a similar effect upon the horse, unaware that Clericus was old and clung with bigoted tenacity to the time-honored canon that he should never exceed six miles an hour. Let "trotters" pass him if they liked; let farmers' drivers leave him far behind; let the modern touring car swish past, enveloping him in a cloud of dust; Clericus ignored them all. "The canon says six miles an hour; the canon I will obey," he seemed to say.

Faithful old Clericus! You detest new-fangled ideas, you abhor sensation, you frown upon experiment, because you are a dear, noble old horse, governed by a canon.

The Rev. David Lloyd, B.A. (Oxon.), was too Christian to whip the old horse and too much of a gentleman to alarm the ancient with anathema, so he allowed the rector's antiquated equine to move in strict accordance with the canon.

"I suppose we shall get there some day," he sighed.

Clericus was suddenly cut short in his fox trot by a jerk at the lines which almost resulted in his sitting down. He changed his mind, however, very likely on the ground that such a proceeding would be uncanonical, and stood stock still instead, while the occupant of the buggy took a flying leap from his seat and landed in the ditch. Scrambling up the bank he passed through a hedge, leaving a quantity of his raiment clinging to the twigs and doing its best to look like a collection of flags observing the King's birthday. This was duly observed by Clericus, who, unaware of any canon to the contrary, turned himself sidewise and looked over the hedge. He saw a small boy with very brown and naked legs running a spirited race with a bull whose angry roars indicated that although behind now he would be up to his victim in about a minute.

The curate, hatless, his coat and nether garments in immediate need of repair, was bounding towards the contestants. The infuriated animal was gaining on the boy; now he had reached him. His head was down. Up went his tail; down went the boy. In another instant he would be gored to death.

Regardless of the terrible risk he was running, the curate reached the spot in time to snatch the helpless boy from beneath the nostrils of the snorting bull. Finding that the young victim was unconscious, his rescuer picked him up in his strong arms and ran for a place of safety, before the angry animal could

decide what next to do. He was not long in making up his mind, however, and, emitting another loud bellow, dashed after his prey.

A moment later the hero of the incident had leapt through a less congested place in the hedge and laid his burden on the road. The boy was still unconscious, but quickly revived under the care of his rescuer. When he opened his eyes he saw the curate kneeling over him, a look of heartfelt gratitude on his face.

"Thank God, you are safe, my little man," he said, reverently. "Feel better now?"

"Yes, thank you," came the answer, as color returned to the white face.

"You lost your race," went on the curate.

"You won yours," said the boy. "You're the curate, aren't you?" he asked, suddenly.

"Yes, and who are you?"

"Felix Terrance."

"Ah, I've heard about you, but have never seen you till to-day. Such a strange introduction. Shake hands."

Felix put out his hand and felt it gripped in a manly way. He let it stay where it rested until the curate released it and helped him to his feet. The boy was still shaky and was obliged to ride home in the buggy.

"But, Felix," said the curate before they got in, "will you let me thank God before we leave this spot for having saved you from the bull?"

The curate dropped to his knees in the dust.

"O Heavenly Father," he prayed, "we thank Thee most heartily for having saved Thy young servant from death. Keep him from all danger, give him his life with Thy blessed sunshine, let no cloud darken the sky of his youth, give him a bounteous supply of wisdom, let him ever be a comfort to his father and mother, and bring him at last into Thine everlasting kingdom. We ask all this in the name and through the mediation of Thy dear Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*"

A faint "*Amen*" came from the boy's lips.

CHAPTER IX.

YE EDITOR'S "PEN PICTURE."

ON the Sunday following the incident in which Felix and the curate played important parts, to say nothing of the quiet interest the bull took in the affair, "Harvest Festival" was held at St. Paul's Church, Marysville, and Barbara and Felix drove over to attend the morning service. It was a glorious day. His majesty the sun had risen early and arrayed himself in regal splendor, causing the surrounding landscape to look up with gladness at the kingly light. The harvest had been a record-breaker, at least so the agricultural correspondent of the *Marysville Weekly Whirler* said, and he ought to know, because he had been seen depositing a substantial sum in the bank, the result of his own crops. Everybody was smiling. Farmers talked with their wives of increasing the size of their barns or of buying another team in time for the spring ploughing; and the storekeepers rubbed their hands with glee because everybody who came in on Saturday had wanted to pay a bill, and when they counted up at ten o'clock most of them found but few outstanding accounts. Farmers' wives and farmers' daughters had come into town on Saturday to buy all sorts of

new things, some of the girls being so intent on spending money their fathers and brothers and hired men had worked eighteen hours a day to earn, that they went home with millinery productions which were never meant for their heads.

The richest fruits of the earth had been used to decorate the church. The window ledges were laden with veritable feasts of fruit and vegetables, and the pillars of the church were almost hidden from view by sheaves of grain. Above the chancel steps a text, the letters of which were made of flowers, reminded the worshippers that "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

Gabriel Tawkesbury, whose coffers had been fattened by this season of prosperity, was a trifle late in getting into his pew, which was immediately beneath the pulpit, and selected by Mr. Tawkesbury because of the facility it afforded him to keep a check upon the theology of the rector. As he marched up the centre aisle in a frock coat and white vest, carrying his Twelfth of July silk hat conspicuously on his arm, he looked magnificent enough to have a processional hymn. This magnificence was much enhanced by the humility of his wife and two daughters, Mary and Beatrice, who followed in good, but plain apparel, looking for all the world like the servile train-bearers of an eastern potentate.

The party did not pass down the crowded church in a group. Oh, no! The Chippendale potentate came first, the train-bearers keeping at a respectful

distance in the rear, just far enough from their lord to give his train room for effect.

Barbara and Felix had arrived in good time, although the number of buggies standing in the church sheds meant that the sacred edifice was then two-thirds filled. Mother and son were, as usual, unpretentious in appearance. Barbara wore a neat dark suit and what was afterwards voted to be the quietest hat in the church threw a subdued shadow upon her calm, sweet face.

Felix, fresh from the encounter with Old Man Deeker's bull, looked the resolute, manly boy that everyone knew him to be, and walked with quiet dignity by his mother's side. The "story of the bull" had appeared in the columns of the *Marysville Whirler* on Saturday, the editor sitting up all Friday night to do justice to it. It was a masterpiece. He told a friend afterwards that the task had carried him back twenty years, when he used to do "outside police" for a Toronto newspaper.

"Those were the days, sir," he said to his friend, "when, between nine and two, I would think nothing of slashing off seven or eight columns of hot stuff, which sometimes included a suicide, a big robbery, perhaps a couple of counterfeit or forgery stories, a strike or lockout, and a fire or two. In addition to this I very often slipped in a human interest story and a drowning. As for scooping the other papers I was a terror."

And let it be said to the editor's credit, the story

he wrote of the bull incident was like himself in every respect. The strain on the type-cases must have been awful. The heading ran:

**BOY'S DESPERATE ENCOUNTER WITH A
MAD BULL.**

**SINGLE-HANDED BATTLE WITH INFURIATED ANIMAL.
SEETHING WITH RAGE THE MONSTER BORE DOWN
UPON THE LAD.**

**PLUCKY FELIX TERRANCE HURLED TO THE GROUND
AND PARTLY GORED.**

**REV. DAVID LLOYD, B.A. (OXON.), DASHES TO
THE RESCUE, DEFIES THE ANGRY MONSTER,
SNATCHES THE UNCONSCIOUS LAD FROM BE-
NEATH ITS SNORTING NOSTRILS, AND BEARS
HIM TO SAFETY.**

**PATHETIC SCENE AT ROADSIDE—CURATE AND BOY
KNEEL IN THE DUST TO THANK GOD FOR THEIR
DELIVERANCE.**

TOWN RINGING WITH CURATE'S PRAISES.

In the face of this it was not surprising that all eyes turned upon the lad Felix and his mother. Neither had seen a printed report of the bull's attack, and were quite unconscious of the attention they received. They occupied a seat well up the centre aisle, and on entering, both knelt before the throne of grace to ask that during divine service they be given quiet and receptive minds, and that

they be filled with that peace which passeth all understanding.

The service was simple, and harvest hymns filled the ivy-covered church with sounds of gladness.

The curate, regarded by the congregation as a hero, read the prayers and announced the hymns in a manner which the critical Gabriel pronounced absolutely orthodox. The *Whirler* headlines had been shown to him on his way to church by an enthusiastic admirer of British pluck, and had shocked him.

The rector preached a learned sermon on thanksgiving, and mentioned the names of great authorities whose existence had never been dreamed of by Mr. Tawkesbury.

CHAPTER X.

BARBARA WINS A GAME OF CHESS.

WHEN service was over, Barbara and Felix found themselves the centre of attraction. All sorts of people gathered around to ask questions and offer congratulations. Neither of them relished the experience; theirs were not natures to feed on the plaudits of the multitude. They tried to get away from the handshaking, and Felix did his best to transfer the interest from himself to Mr. Lloyd. He saw nothing heroic in being chased by a bull, but he did see valor in the curate's conduct. But the curiosity of those around him could not be so easily turned aside, and for fully fifteen minutes mother and son had to submit to the deluge. Barbara possessed a modesty that made her reticent, and at the present time she looked what she was, a pure-minded, gentle, unassuming woman. She was grateful for the congratulations bestowed upon her.

On their way home they were obliged to halt a dozen times to exchange a word with neighbors who had heard the "bull story." As they neared the house Felix craned his neck.

"Who is that standing on the stoop, mamma," he asked, suddenly.

Barbara looked ahead to see.

"I can't make out at this distance," she told him.

"I believe it's grandma," said the boy as they drew near.

"That's just who it is, Felix," admitted Barbara, with heightened color.

"I wonder why grandma has come to see us," speculated Felix, with an enquiring glance at his mother.

Barbara had become thoughtful and answered, "I wonder," as one in a dream. She knew that John's mother would not have taken that journey in failing health without a reason. What was that reason? She looked at Felix as if expecting him to tell her, but the boy was silent. What was the answer? Was she wrong in asking the question? No. She knew that the eyes of others were on Felix, and that her watch must be unceasing. She feared nothing from John; he made no plans and did not watch for opportunities. But the others, what of them? Would they ever get her boy? No, a thousand times, no. She would fling this peace-loving nature of hers away, and would fight like a tigress when her young are in danger.

Barbara had settled none of these perplexing questions when their buggy turned in at the gate.

"Well, Grandma Terrance, glad to see you," said Barbara, going forward to kiss the sunken cheek.

"Hullo, grandma," cried Felix at the same time. He too kissed the visitor.

Widow Terrance received these expressions of

regard as a very old and very rheumatic queen might receive the homage of unimportant courtiers. She muttered something to herself and turned to go into the house, followed by Barbara. Felix took the horse to the yard, where his father was doing chores.

"John drove me over to see ye after all the excitement about owld Decker's bull and the bhoy," began the widow, as Barbara bustled around to get dinner ready.

"Was John at church, grandma?" she asked in a careless way.

"Yes."

That little word was all the widow allowed to escape. Barbara had expected a fuller answer. She was disappointed, but did not show it. The widow knew that, and emitted a sniff of satisfaction, accompanying the sniff with a sudden rubbing of the nose peculiar to some old people who are congratulating themselves upon having scored a point.

Barbara tried again.

"Did John call at the cottage for you, or did he see you at church, grandma?" she asked.

"Sure, now, I met him at church," confessed the old lady.

Barbara kept on laying the table for dinner, as if she were thinking of nothing else in the world but knives and forks and plates and dishes.

John and Felix came in, the dinner was put on the table, and all three did their best to make grandma enjoy it.

She ate little, and each time Barbara looked up she found the widow looking at Felix, as if she were measuring how much he ate. John talked just as much as he usually talked when at dinner; or it might be put in another way by saying that he talked just as little as he usually talked when at the table. Felix said all it was necessary to say on such an auspicious occasion, and seemed to be keeping his smiles inside for repairs. Barbara tried to interest the diners in numerous little matters, but they all seemed to be making their own food for discussion and eating it in private.

When this very jolly dinner was over Widow Terrance looked out of the window and thought she must be going soon.

"Oi've been thinkin', Barbara," she said slowly, "that Felix could spind a nice little wake wid me. He would cheer me up. Sure, he's a bright lad. Would ye loike to stay away from school an' have a nice toime wid grandma?"

This last question was flung at the boy with unerring aim, and landed where it was intended to land. He saw little of Marysville, and knew that things were livelier there than in Chippendale; a week in such a place would be glorious. The "nice time with grandma" was the part of the invitation he had his doubts about.

"I'd like to go to Marysville," he told her guardedly.

She failed to notice any reservation in the boy's

answer, and turned at once to Barbara, who had been looking on with evident concern.

"I suppose he can come?" she asked, as if there were no answer in the world but "yes."

Barbara looked at John for traces of his having been a party to the proposal, but her husband was then engaged in boring another hole in a harness strap, and the leather was so thick and the instrument he was using so blunt, it was impossible for him to look up just then, even if the anxious, questioning eyes of Barbara were upon him.

This, then, was the reply to the question in the buggy, thought Barbara in her dilemma. What should she do? Let her impressionable little boy of ten spend a week at the cottage, where he would see little more than evidences of the widow's faith and have a daily talk with Father McCarthy? What harm could it do? They could not take the boy away; he was hers; she had prayed over him, had asked God to give her strength to keep him in her faith, and had wrung a promise from the man who loved her that it should be so. What was there to risk?

You had better decide quickly, Barbara; an old and impatient lady is waiting. Continued silence might lead her to imagine you are preparing a reply as carefully as an ambassador prepares a reply to the all-important question of a foreign diplomat. Quick, she expects you to answer at once. Speak, Barbara.

"Grandma, dear, you are very kind to want Felix

to spend a week with you, and he would have such a good time in Marysville, but that terrible experience he had with the bull has made everybody talk so much about him that I think a week among people who would like to talk with him on the subject all day long would make him grow so very important we wouldn't be able to live with him. I think, grandma dear, if you don't mind, we had better keep him near us while the story is so fresh in everyone's mind," said Barbara in her sweetest tones.

Just then John managed to get that hole bored.

"Why, yes, mother, that really is the best thing for Felix while the story's goin' around," he chimed in.

John's remarks set Barbara's mind at rest, and she gave him a smile full of love. She was sure now he had not had a hand in planning that visit.

Felix read a great deal in his mother's reply. They had learned to talk to each other with their eyes, and when she shattered the dream he had of a good time in Marysville he knew she had reason for doing so.

Widow Terrance was very wise and took her defeat at the hands of her gentle but equally wise daughter-in-law with the good grace of a diplomat who has lost a game on the chess-board of domestic statecraft.

CHAPTER XI.

REFLECTIONS OF AN ENGLISH CURATE.

“ ST. PAUL’S RECTORY,

“ MARYSVILLE, ONT.,

“ CANADA.

Dec. 10, 19—.

“ MY DEAR MOTHER,—Your letter proved to be a source of comfort and inspiration to me; and I am trying daily to act upon your advice, which, as it comes from the wisest and best mother in the world, must needs be the wisest and best advice in the world.

“ I like Canada immensely. The climate is superb and there are innumerable opportunities for an Englishman to make a real success of his life. But he must work and wait and hope.

“ The rectory where I am stopping is a charming place. It is not at all magnificent, but it is what is very much better, it is ecclesiastical. I mean the atmosphere of the place.

“ The rector is a dear old man, and I am anxious to relieve him of all parish work, so that he may spend his days in his study. He is very studious, and I am quite afraid to talk with him upon profound subjects. He is quite terrible with authorities. He has a most serene disposition. I believe that if he were seated

with a book in his study and the rectory collapsed about him he would raise his snowy head in the calmest manner and say quietly, 'Something very serious has happened. It will now be necessary for me to move my chair.'

"I understand that of late years he has done very little visiting. I can quite believe it. The older he grows the more pleasure he finds in his ponderous tomes, and less in the very ordinary people who attend his church.

"Really, mother, a Canadian 'farm parish' is a very difficult problem for a young man who wants to roll up his sleeves and hammer this down and build that up, and get this going and that going.

"There are no poor farmers. What I mean is, there are no farmers so poor that they want you to lend them a dollar or give their wives a fresh air ticket or buy shoes for their children. I think they would be much easier to get along with if they needed some of these things.

"They are very proud. The ownership of large pieces of God's earth may generate that spirit. The survey of a hundred acres of cultivated land is perhaps enough to make a man feel he is as good as any other man in the world—because he owns what he sees. But it is this pride which makes the clergyman's work doubly hard.

"Nevertheless there are some awfully nice people in this parish, and I have struck up an acquaintance

with a remarkable boy. His name is Felix Terrance and I look for great things from him if he gets half a chance. He is the only child of a Protestant mother and Roman Catholic father. He is of his mother's faith, I am glad to say, and it is really beautiful to behold their devotion to each other. They are inseparable. She is a very good and a very wise woman and has often to curb the extraordinary and sometimes tempestuous spirit of the boy. He worships his mother and shows that he has inherited much of her wisdom by allowing her to guide him.

"I don't think he loves his father.

"Mrs. Reid is just like a mother to me and quite embarrasses me at times by her assiduousness. Her attitude towards the rector is quite amusing. She is the very antithesis of himself. His feet are always planted firmly on the ground; she, poor woman, is often flying about in the air.

"She regards him as the wisest man in the world except upon one subject—that of his rightful claim to recognition as a genius. Only the other evening, while talking with her on the landing before I went to my room, she said she could never understand his not going to Toronto and letting them know how much he knew, and demanding from the Bishop a living of importance, or a lecturer's chair at Trinity. I tried to explain that true genius shrinks from the methods of 'getting on' practised by people of a lower order, and prefers to die unnoticed and un-

known rather than thrust itself into the world's glare where so many high offices are held by shallowpates.

"She did not argue, but went quickly into her bedroom without saying 'good-night.'

"The Roman Catholic priest here is a good-natured Irishman. He is absolutely faithful to his Church, of course, but is so very kind to everybody who is looking for advice or friendship that it is hard to understand him holding uncharitable views about Protestants. I don't believe he does. I have had many talks with him and his humanity rings true; but he seems to be a man who could be very stern if a letter from his bishop demanded it. I may be wrong; I hope I am. After all, it would only be an earnest of his zeal for the Church. Furthermore, I am perhaps not right in even inferring that his bishop would ever send such a letter. I wanted something to illustrate what I meant, that was all.

"You know, mother, the Church of Rome makes terrible demands upon her servants, and she is often served by men who count no risk too great to run, no danger too terrible to face, no sacrifice too great to make in her behalf. Take for example the Jesuits. When we see these men creeping stealthily into Indian camps to carry off babies for baptism into their church, and running the risk of being caught and skinned alive, we are tempted to say harsh things about a system which makes such demands upon its faithful followers—men who go on from day to day in prayer and fasting and sacrifice.

" Shortly after you receive this letter, mother, the bells of Christmas will tell of the birth of our blessed Saviour. May their message of peace find you in good health.

" I shall pray specially for you on the ' Happy Morn.'

" Your affectionate son,

" DAVID."

CHAPTER XII.

CHRISTMAS DAY AT HILLCREST FARM.

"Hark the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King,
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim,
Christ is born in Bethlehem."

LET the merry shout of childhood fill the house with joy; let the sleighbells jingle in the frosty air; let kindness fill the human heart; let peace on earth abound. 'Tis Christmas Day.

Felix jumped out of bed with a bound. Oh, how good a boy of twelve feels on Christmas morning. His heart was filled with the joy of living. Clad only in his nightshirt, he went over to the window and raised the blind to see the day come in.

Felix, watch the dawn of this Christmas Day. Stand in silence at thy window while God unfolds the wonders of the sky; see the night clouds pass away; see the breaking eastern sky; see the heavenly light arise.

Thou shalt recall this Christmas Day.

John Terrance was downstairs shaking the stove,

and putting on the kettle, and Barbara was dressing in her room. Uncle Fred from Philadelphia was rising, too.

While Felix watched the snow-mantled countryside grow brighter Barbara entered and greeted him with the sweetest and most motherly of smiles. The boy sprang to her side.

"A merry Christmas, mother!"

Barbara took him in her arms and held him tight.

Merry Christmas, indeed!

Happy Barbara!

Happy Felix!

Mother and son watched the wakening day, their hearts bounding with happiness, their souls aglow with love. Let the light come in upon this scene, 'tis one to be remembered. See the boy's hand held tightly in her own; see the gentle smile of mother-love upon her sweet face; see his tumbled hair touching her shoulder; see the light of happiness upon that resolute young countenance.

Watch this sunrise, Barbara; the night clouds drift away, the eastern sky is breaking, the heavenly light comes up.

Thou shalt recall this Christmas Day.

"Merry Christmas, father."

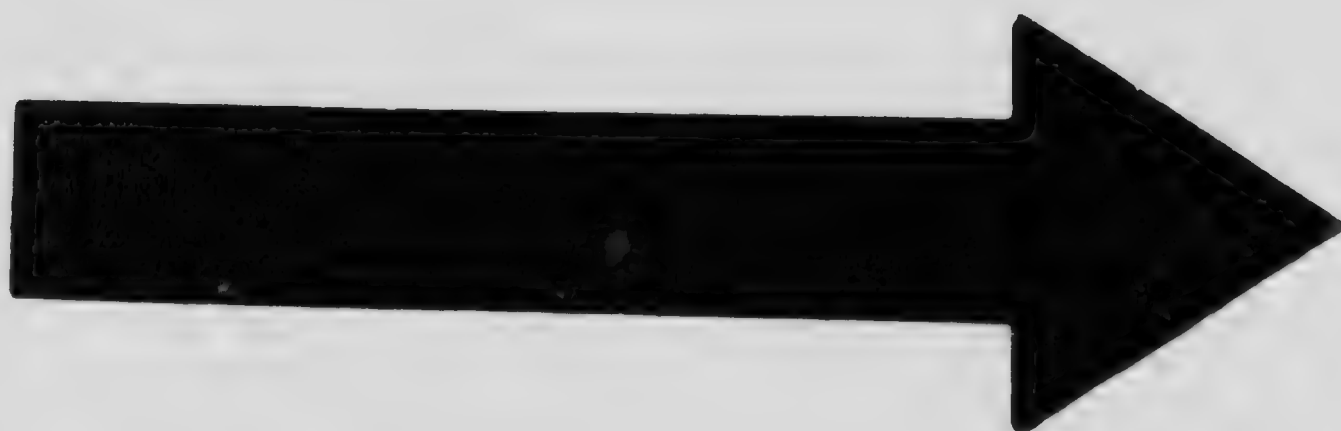
"Merry Christmas, John."

"Merry Christmas, Barbara, girlie."

"Merry Christmas, Felix, lad."

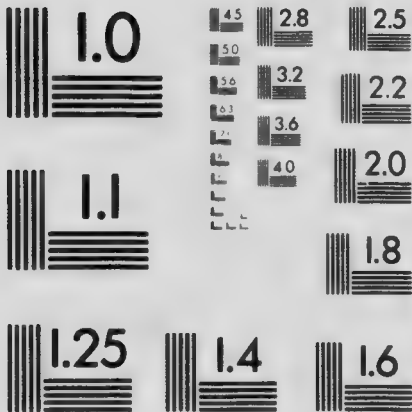
"Merry Christmas, Uncle Fred."

Let everybody have a merry Christmas. Here is



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John with his arms round Barbara, and Felix waiting his turn; and Uncle Fred standing near the kitchen window with a good-natured smile on his face, thinking what a happy scene it is, and how it shows the love that reigns in Hillcrest Farm, and wishing he had a boy like that; and glad that Barbara is his sister, and that a splendid fellow like John is her husband. And there is the kettle lid dancing for joy, and the steam puffing out with a great fuss, as if it were Mr. Tawkesbury delivering a mighty speech; and there is a frying-pan on the stove with several pieces of ham in it sputtering away as if they were impatient to jump out and run down somebody's throat; and there is the table looking so clean and inviting, and the chairs all in their places saying to each other, "I wonder why these people don't sit down. One would imagine they were too happy to think of breakfast."

And there are all the good things left by that wonderful old gentleman, Santa Claus, piled up on the horsehair sofa under the window; and it really looks as if the good St. Nicholas had remembered everybody in the right way—driving gauntlets for John, a gold watch for Barbara, a real air gun for Felix, and such a handsome muffler for Uncle Fred. And there is Uncle Fred telling Felix he believes he has left something in the toe of his stocking; and Felix, thrusting his hand down to see, brings up a twenty-dollar gold piece, and John, Barbara and Felix saying "Oh!" at the same time; and Uncle Fred pretend-

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ing he knew nothing at all about it; and Barbara finding an American bill for the same amount under the edge of her plate, and jumping up to give her big, kind brother a warm embrace; and John discovering that just as he pulled out his chair there was a gold watch chain on it; and Uncle Fred again vowing he knew nothing about it, and was it likely that he would think of the man who had been so good a husband to his sister for thirteen years? Not very likely.

And now John was hitching up to drive over to Marysville to church, where he would hear the sweet music of Christmas, and gaze upon the little wax figure of Jesus as it was borne down the aisles by the good Father McCarthy while the choir chanted words of adoration; and that old lady by his side would be Widow Terrance; and after mass John would drive her over to Hillcrest Farm for Christmas dinner.

But while John is away there is Barbara working at a great rate getting dinner ready. Felix is out in the stables and barns explaining all the wonders of the farm to Uncle Fred, and will be in shortly with an armful of wood from the pile. Then won't the fire roar, and won't the twenty-pound turkey get his deserts, and won't the pudding boil, and the potato and squash saucepans crowd each other on top of the stove? And when the smell begins to come from the oven won't Uncle Fred and Felix begin to sniff and wonder how much longer John and his mother will be before the sleighbells on their cutter jingle. And is it not a good thing to watch Barbara go about her work in such a way?

How nice she looks in that big apron, which begins at her soft, white neck and ends somewhere near her tireless feet; and how quick she is, and how accurate. Just the exact quantity of flour and the right amount of sugar.

And does it not do your heart good to watch her face? There seems to be so much perfect joy in it; and, despite her activity and womanly anxiety to have this great meal a success, her face betrays no sign of worry; she seems so confident about it all. If you look very intently into her tender eyes you may see a solitary tear in one or other of them once or twice during the morning. But Barbara seems to learn of its arrival at once and brushes it away before you are quite sure it was a tear; or were you not looking at a dewdrop glistening in the sun? And is it not good to hear Uncle Fred, as he sits and puffs a cigar, tell his sister of all the wonderful sights in Quaker City; and to watch the eyes of Felix as the stories are told; and to hear Uncle Fred tell Barbara what a good time he is having, and how glad he is to be with them, and that he is not surprised that she is such a happy woman, for John is such a good fellow. And now the merry jingle of the sleigh-bells is heard and Felix runs to the door and throws it open, for there, turning in off the road, are John and Grandma Terrance. And isn't the old lady wrapped up so that the keen air can't reach her failing body?

"Here they are, mother!" cries Felix, and Barbara runs to the door, and Uncle Fred comes along too, and they step out into the snow and kiss the old

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lady on the nose, because that is all there is to be seen of her; and just while they are helping her out of the cutter, Felix turns and sees another cutter coming in at the gate, and straightway gives a loud shout of joy.

"Here's Uncle Jim and Aunt Hannah, mother, see!" he cries as he dashes off to meet them.

Such a meeting on that glad Christmas morning. "Merry Christmas, Grandma Terrance! Merry Christmas, Uncle Jim and Aunt Hannah! Merry Christmas everybody!"

And look at the parcels the Kings have brought; look at the smile on Uncle Jim's face as he grips the hand of the brother he hasn't seen for six long years; and look at the expression on Fred's face—such brotherly love. And see old Grandma Terrance look so flustered when the two big men decide to kiss her thin old cheeks, now that she is in the warmth of the kitchen and Barbara is uncoiling the woolen scarves that never seem to end, and Felix is kneeling at her feet to remove her heavy overshoes.

See how they all stand around her high-backed chair, as if she were a queen and they her courtiers. Was there ever so much honesty in homage? How gently Barbara removes the wraps, saying loving things that make grandma pleased. See how she bears off the pile of garments and returns to her work of preparation.

Dinner at last.

"For what we are about to receive the Lord make us truly thankful, for Christ's sake.—*Amen.*"

Come, let us seat ourselves at this wonderful table and taste the turkey, and vow that it is the grandest and tenderest and best-cooked turkey that ever graced a Christmas meal. Pass those vegetables, please, they look so good; and send us over those pickles of Barbara's making and some of that snowy home-made loaf, and a little more dressing and cranberry sauce. "Now, grandma, won't you have another helping—do." "Just a nice thin wafer from the breast." "Felix, you've had two big plates of the whole bill-of-fare; you had better leave room for pudding."

Well, then, bring on the pudding.

Ah, such a pudding! See the size of it; see the steam about it, like white clouds around a rich brown world, full of good things. Stick a piece of berried holly in the top, John, and carry it to the table in your best style. Let them all see how proud you are of Barbara girlie's pudding; and let her be seated at the time, blushing like a rose, and almost ready to cry because everybody loves her so, and everybody says such nice things about her. Let Grandma Terrence, who sits at Barbara's right, lay a crooked hand upon the plump one near her, and say a word about the dinner; let Felix bring on the nuts, and oranges, and apples, and figs, and cakes, and let everybody start again.

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." *Amen.*

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHURCH THREATENS.

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, Marysville, was crowded. Word had been circulated in the parish during the week that Father McCarthy would read an important decree issued by the Pope. The faithful must all be present. Old men and women who had not been to mass for many a long day, because of physical infirmity, had made heroic response to the bidding of the parish priest, and were now wedged tightly in the crowd of expectant worshippers who thronged the place. Backsliders were jammed against the devout, and the customary procession down the centre aisle had to be dispensed with on that occasion.

What could it all mean? The oldest member of Father McCarthy's flock could not recall having been bidden in such a peremptory manner to attend service. There was old Mrs. Qualey, who always boasted that the priest had given her a special dispensation to stay at home because of her bad leg, sitting doubled up in a corner looking utterly miserable; and Old Man Deekers, who had told his Protestant neighbors that they were as good as he was any tin, and that no parish priest could drive him to church.

John Terrance came late, and people wondered

why he fought his way through that almost solid body of humanity. Now he was near the front, his coat sleeve brushing against the figure of the Blessed Virgin, her face looking so sweet and restful—just like Barbara's, he thought. And lying on her left arm was the Child Jesus. Felix had looked like that twelve years ago, he said himself. Barbara and Felix were at home now—continued to think—at home going over the Sunday school lesson. Oh, when would the organ begin the voluntary?

Why had Father McCarthy told him not to fail to be at mass this Sunday?

Why had he obeyed the command?

His position was such that everybody could see him. His six feet of splendid manhood looked striking beside the figure of the Blessed Virgin; his rich, brown hair touching the arm upon which the infant Jesus lay. He regretted that his position was so conspicuous. It was too late to alter it now; besides, was not the organ playing and the priest coming in?

He must stand still.

The organ stopped, and Father McCarthy proceeded with the celebration of the mass. After the reading of the Gospel he removed his chasuble and, leaving the sanctuary, entered the pulpit.

"In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*"

As the priest delivered this most impressive of all invocations he crossed himself.

"My children," he began, his deep voice ringing

like a rich-toned bell, "it is my duty to-day to read to you what is known as the *Ne Temere* decree and to solemnly warn you of the terrible consequences which will befall any who fail to obey the provisions of this law."

The reading was done slowly, the Father pausing to allow the words of the decree to be grasped by his congregation.

It set forth the circumstances which induced the Holy Father, Pope Pius X., in his solicitude for all the churches, to advise some modification in the decree (first proclaimed by the Council of Trent in the 16th century), and proceeded to declare with characteristic emphasis the attitude of the Roman Church under two particular heads.

"1.—Engagement or Betrothal. Only those matrimonial engagements are considered to be valid and to beget canonical effects which have been made in writing, signed by both parties, and by either the parish priest or the ordinary of the place, or at least by two witnesses.

"2.—Marriage. Only those marriages are valid which are contracted before the parish priest, or the ordinary of the place, or a priest delegated by either of these and at least two witnesses."

The decree produced a profound effect upon those who understood what it meant; those who had failed to comprehend—and they appeared to be in the majority—kept their eyes riveted upon the priest. Surely he would explain. John Terrance, who stood

near the figure of the Blessed Virgin, had grasped enough to know why the priest had told him to attend that service, and began to display signs of unrest.

Why were so many men and women looking at him? he asked himself. They knew he had a Protestant wife, and a son being reared in the faith of his mother; but that had been known long enough. Why should they stare now?

The priest's words came again with more terrible distinctness: "Only those marriages are valid which are contracted before the parish priest."

The sentence was clear enough, and if it meant what it said, it applied to his union with Barbara.

The thought maddened him, and he almost cried out. He did try to raise a hand to shake at the priest, but found his arms pinioned by the press of people. If more were said to make their union appear unholy and to stamp Felix as a nameless *thing* he would fling these people from him and denounce that white-haired old man in the pulpit as a liar.

"O God, this can't be true," he told himself.

Hark, the priest is speaking again, telling the people that the decree does not affect marriages performed before a recent date, and the agonized man takes hope.

"Thank God for that," he murmured.

Mad thought, John Terrance, thou art to be crucified for conscience sake.

Like a sword of flaming fire came the next words

of the priest, and the weapon smote his trembling heart so that it shriveled at its touch.

“My children, there is a sacrament of marriage in the Church. If a man should marry without receiving that sacrament the Church has the right to tell him she refuses to recognize his marriage—no matter how well he may have complied with the civil law—and to deny him Holy Communion.

Confusion seized and held him in its grip. His body burned and chilled alternately; beads of sweat showed themselves upon his brow. What was this Gethsemane he was entering? Had not the priest named a date which put him right? How could he be wrong in the eyes of God and of the Church one day, and, without altering his position, right another? If he had been married without the Church's sacrament thirteen years ago, then how could the Church tell him now that she recognized his marriage as valid, and in the same breath declare such a union to be so unholy that the Catholic man or woman guilty of marrying without the sacrament of matrimony should not be permitted to approach the Holy Table?

For a moment he lost sight of the congregation and the figure of the priest. His head was in a whirl of perplexity; thoughts came tumbling in upon his mind so that he could grasp nothing. Torn by the awful fear that he had sinned against God and must look out for the safety of his soul, the wretched man turned a wild, beseeching look at the figure near

him. Had she nothing to say to set him right—she who looked so calm and beautiful and good?

His soul was on a rack more awful than that of the Inquisition. Oh, that the priest would put him right! But hark, the father's voice becomes clear again to his ears. Let him listen.

Leaning over the pulpit side, so that he might more closely look into the upturned faces of his people, the priest, his hands clasped, uttered in slow, measured tones the final warning:

"My son or my daughter, if the marriage clause in the *Ne Temere* decree affects you, in that you were, in some day long gone, married in accordance with the state law, and without receiving the sacrament of matrimony from the Holy Church, let me tell you the Church does not seek to separate you from your partner, but she does ask you to search your heart to see if God hath placed His seal upon your union.

"I leave the matter to your conscience."

The words fell upon the wounded heart of John Terrance like blows from a jagged weapon. He realized now that the Church would not declare his marriage null, but that she had left the settling of the agonizing question to his conscience. And what did his conscience tell him?

That which is unholy in the sight of God to-day must have been unholy yesterday.

Closing his eyes to the scene around him, he stood motionless beside the Blessed Virgin and Her Child. Had he had strength enough to have cut a path

through the solid mass of worshippers he would have fled from the church, but to leave now meant exposing himself to the fierce light of criticism. He determined to wait till mass was over.

The notes of the organ and the sweet voices of the choristers sounded so far away he scarcely heard them, and before he knew what had happened he found himself alone in the church. He looked wildly about him. The music and the voices had ceased, the church was deserted. Where was the figure of the Mother of God? Whose was that voice he heard? Where was he? The sacred vessels, the missal, but recently brought from the altar, the smell of sacramental wine—what did it mean?

"Are you better, my son. I am afraid the heat of the church overpowered you for a moment. An usher found you a little dazed and brought you into the sacristy. Drink this."

The miserable man's mind became clearer and his eyes told him that Father McCarthy was speaking.

"I'm all right now, Father," he said sullenly. "I'll go home."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOME-WRECKING "NE TEMERE."

THE drive home gave the unhappy man opportunity to think more calmly over what had happened, and of his own position. The horse was allowed its own way and travelled much slower than the thoughts of its driver, who paid no heed to the rate the animal was going. Men he knew waved to him as he passed their farms, but he did not return the salutes. He thanked heaven it was not summer time, when scores of people he knew would be on the road, or near the gates of their farms, ready to have a word with him about the season's work. As it was there seemed to be an unnecessary number out in the barnyards or standing at their house doors enjoying the keen air. Why cannot people mind their own business and remain indoors, instead of looking out to see what other folks are doing? There was Old Man Deekers standing at the gate near the roadway. He could not have been in from church very long, and yet he looked as if he had become part of the scenery so still was he standing.

John would have turned down another road, had there been one, to avoid meeting this old man, whom he had seen in the church, but there was nothing to do but keep straight on. He gave the lines a vicious jerk, hoping that the man at the gate would see that

he was in a hurry to get home and let him pass on. But Old Man Deekers had not stood in the cold, stamping his feet and wondering why this particular cutter was so long in coming, for the mere pleasure of seeing it pass his gate.

"Hi, there! Whoa, whoa, steady mare, steady girl! Well, John, I see'd yer at church this mornin'. I ain't bin over there for many a long day. Heard there wuz to be somethin' speshul an' thought I'd go."

If John ever felt like suddenly pouncing upon a man and gripping his windpipe till his tongue lolled out, he told himself he felt like that now. This old man had waited an hour for this opportunity to talk, and the evil grin that played round his mouth as he patted the mare, just as if that were all he had waited to do, drove the man in the cutter nearly wild with rage. But he held himself in check. Old Man Deekers could do the talking.

"Pretty strong decree that," went on the old inquisitor, giving the mare's breeching a tug.

"Think so?" answered the victim on the rack.

"Guess 'tis. Hits the likes o' you pretty hard, don't it?"

"Can't see it that way," replied the tortured man, feigning ignorance of its meaning.

"Well," said the old man, as he discovered a place of interest on one of the runners, "plain words is plain words, ain't they, and nothin' could be plainer nor what the priest said about you not bein' married 'cordin' to the Church."

This last twist to the machinery of the rack upon which his tortured body lay, drew a groan from John and shattered his resolution to betray no feeling. Leaping to his feet, he turned fiercely upon the man who had so mercilessly tormented him.

"You're a —— mischief-maker and liar!" he shouted angrily. Then, brandishing his driving whip so that it cut the frosty air, he added, "And if you weren't an old man I'd flay ye."

Old Man Deekers fell back at the vehemence of the man he had always regarded as of quiet temper and slipped as nimbly as he could to the other side of the gate, seeing that it fastened with a certain snap as he did so. From this position of safety he peered through the bars at the incensed man in the cutter, who suddenly dropped to his seat, seized the lines and drove away.

"Seems to take it pretty bad," muttered the considerate old gentleman as he stumbled through the snow to his house.

Felix was out on the road waiting for his father when he turned at the crossroads, and ran forward to meet him.

"We couldn't tell what had made you so late home from church, father," he cried on jumping into the cutter. "Did you go to grandma's?"

The name made the troubled man start. He remembered now, for the first time, that his mother had not been in church, or that if she had been he had not seen her, or she had failed to notice him. He

should have called at the cottage as he drove past. The fear of what his mother might read into the decree when she heard of it, if she had not already done so, added fresh fuel to the furnace within him.

Felix, tired of waiting a reply, began to talk of other things.

Home at last!

To-day it was a haven of refuge, a shelter from the curious gaze of people who had tormented him in that stifling church, a place where he would find a loving woman happy to receive him. Let conflicting thought take flight; let anxiety depart; let peace enter his soul, for this is *home*, and Barbara and Felix are there to welcome him.

He brightened when he looked into her face and saw there the light of incorruptible goodness and majestic peace.

He would fling these bad dreams to the winds and be himself.

So easy to resolve, so hard to achieve. The clear, steady penetrating eyes of Barbara saw the furrows on his brow, and his lapses into brooding silence told her that all was not well.

"Aren't you feeling well, John?" she asked, as she watched the heroic attempts to swallow food that seemed unwilling to go down.

"Yes, I'm all right, girlie," he answered, with a sigh that gave denial to his words.

Barbara was a wise woman. Her manner invited confidence, but she never sought it. Felix had learn-

that, and always saw to it that he never did anything which could not be voluntarily confessed to his mother. She did not ask for a daily recital of the boy's activities; she knew he had a strong humanity which led him to do daring things and she was glad that it was so. But when trouble settled upon that fair young brow, the face she turned to him bade him open his heart and find a resting-place.

Unconsciously her husband had learned the same lesson, and the hour had now come for him to seek comfort where he had always found it. But his lips were sealed.

"I can't tell her what is worrying me," he said to himself as he wandered from room to room that afternoon. He tried to read, but the pages were either upside down or the letters so jumbled together that they conveyed no sense. He went out to the stables and did a number of unnecessary things around the horses, things he would never have thought of doing under any other circumstances. Barbara knew he had left the house, and when his return was delayed, began to wonder if something really serious were not the matter. She did not tell herself that he was sick but she intuitively felt that something had been said at church that morning which troubled him. Perhaps Father McCarthy had spoken sternly about members of the church who did not attend regularly. Well, so far as she was concerned, she had never asked her husband to leave his faith, nor would she ever do so, and if John wished to go to mass oftener

he might do so without giving offence to her. "Good Catholics were just as good as Protestants," she told herself. She would love him just the same.

John returned to the house at supper time and ate the meal in silence. It was mission service night at the schoolhouse, and Barbara and Felix were going. They liked Mr. Lloyd and looked forward with pleasure to the monthly service.

That evening the school-room was filled, and the curate felt rewarded for having opened the mission. There was no ritual. Two reading-lamps stood on the teacher's desk, and it was here that Mr. Lloyd stood during service.

The order of Divine Service, as laid down in the book of Common Prayer, was observed. There was as yet no choir and the singing did not suffer on that account. The hymns were old favorites—"We love the place, O God," "Hark, my soul, it is the Lord," "Lead, kindly Light," and "Abide with Me."

The curate preached a short sermon. He spoke simply and fervently of Jesus Christ as the bearer of all burdens, and told his little congregation that when they were beset with trials and temptations, to turn to Him whose body was nailed upon the cross of Calvary. He had suffered that martyrdom for their sakes, and only asked in return that those who bore His name should cast all their cares upon Him, "for He careth for you."

As Barbara and Felix left the school-house they

were met by Mrs. Mutch, whose life's work was to look after the affairs of other people. She may, therefore, be safely described as a lady who always minded her own business.

Had they heard of the thing, she just forgot what it was called, that had been read at the Catholic church that morning? Everybody was talking about it. Some people were crying over it. Good gracious, what would happen next? The Roman Church had altogether too much to say about what people should do and what they should not do. This was outrageous—the worst she'd ever heard. It was all right for them to fix their services up to suit themselves, but what right had the Pope, or any other foreigner, to come between a decent man and his wife in Chippendale, or any other place, she would like to know? She supposed that one of these fine days she'd see fires blazing on the hills and hear the poor Protestants who wouldn't kiss the crucifix screaming for mercy. A nice time o' day, for sure.

Completely in the dark as to what the talkative old lady was driving at, Barbara thought it best to enter into no discussion and bade her good-night.

As Felix drove her home she said to herself a dozen times, "I will ask John; he will tell me. Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me."

CHAPTER XV.

"I AM YOUR WIFE."

"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee,
Or to turn away from following after thee:
For whither thou goest, I will go;
And where thou lodgest, I will lodge:
Thy people shall be my people,
And thy God my God."

—Ruth 1: 16.

HIS WIFE and son at church, John Terrance was left to himself and his thoughts. He would fight this thing out. Without knowing it, he was marching into battle miserably equipped. Unskilled fighter that he was, he meant to hurl the weight of an affection of the heart against an impregnable force of subtle intellect, and buoyed himself up with the mad belief that he would win. Armed with this delusion, he set out to do battle with a foe that would fight him with weapons taken from his own make-up—the weapons of *fear* and *superstition*, grown rusty no doubt in the last thirteen years, but still fit for use in such a conflict.

He was untutored and failed to arrange his thoughts so that the facts appeared quite clear. Nor could he even keep the facts in proper order so that he might think connectedly about them. Had it been

otherwise, this story would never have been woven about the persons of John and Barbara Terrance and the lad Felix.

Let us set the facts in order for him.

He was the son of parents steeped in Roman Catholicism.

For nearly forty years he had been in the bosom of the Roman Church.

Thirteen years before this date, he had allowed a great and devouring love for a beautiful Protestant girl to take complete possession of his heart, so that his devotion towards the Church became a thing of secondary importance.

He had never ceased to be a Roman Catholic, although his attendance at confession and mass was irregular.

Every scrap of religious teaching he had believed in thirteen years ago he believed in to-day, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary.

Since his marriage a kindly-natured parish priest had never exacted more than one confession a year.

To-day he had heard a decree, issued by the Pope of Rome, who was still to him God's chosen representative—the Voice of God on earth.

The parish priest had said, not to him personally, but to the whole congregation, that a marriage such as his had been made without the sacrament of matrimony, and the decree had said that after 1908 such a marriage would not be recognized by the Church, which meant, that in the eyes of the Church,

the Catholic party would be living in sin, no matter whether the state said otherwise or not.

He had been taught and still believed that to be disobedient to the Church was to sin against God, and that to sin against God was to incur terrible punishment hereafter.

Disregarding the date named in the decree, he must now face the straight question, "Am I living in sin with Barbara, in that I did not receive the sacrament of matrimony?"

Those were the facts the miserable man had to face. They were the forces against which he had to fight. Now, let us see how he defends himself in the early stages of the battle. Here is his defence in his own words, repeated a hundred times in the kitchen of his home while his wife and son worshipped in the little schoolhouse.

"I love Barbara."

"I love my boy, Felix."

"The date in the decree lets me out."

Wonderful defence, John Terrance.

Do you remember the priest's words, "I leave the matter to your conscience."

What does your conscience say, John Terrance?

"That which is unholy in the sight of God to-day must have been unholy yesterday."

And the wages of sin?

"Death."

He took the lamp and carried it into the parlor, where a life-sized picture of Barbara's head adorned the wall. Raising the light so that its rays fell upon

the beautiful face of the woman who had been his guiding star during the past thirteen years, he stood looking into the features, upon which rested a holy calm. The thirteen years of their married life passed in panoramic order; every incident of moment was revealed with such clearness it seemed to have happened only yesterday. At every stage during that thirteen years' journey she stood nobly out as his guardian angel. He turned to the adjoining wall and looked upon the curly head of a boy of five years, a pair of searching, fearless eyes returning his look, a little smile playing around a resolute mouth.

Tears welled into his eyes, his whole frame shook with a grief he could not utter, and he set down the lamp. Dropping to his knees before the sweet, quiet face of his wife, her eyes looking down upon him with ineffable love, he buried his haggard face in his hands and prayed, "O God, don't tell me that I have been living in sin with her!"

When Barbara and Felix returned from service they found him sitting near the stove, a book in his hand. He greeted them with a smile, and Barbara's heart bounded with joy.

"Have you been lonely without us, John?" she asked in her loving manner.

"I missed you Barbara, girlie," he replied with a smile.

Felix went to bed soon afterwards and when they were alone Barbara drew up her chair beside him.

"Well, we had a lovely service to-night. I do like the curate," she began, brightly.



"I am your wife."

"Were there many there?" he asked.

"Yes; the schoolroom was filled. I think the mission will grow so fast we'll have to build a little church in Chippendale. Mr. Lloyd is well liked. He says such comforting things in his sermons."

"What did he say to-night, girlie?"

"Well, I can't tell you it all, but he told us not to try to bear our own burdens but to let Christ bear them for us."

Her voice comforted him and he became more like himself. Laying a hand upon her arm, he told her what he had heard at church; how it had appeared to his mind, how complicated it all seemed.

She did not look at him during the telling, but kept her eyes fixed on the fire so that he would not see any emotion she might feel. She wished to hear it *all* so that she might understand. When he had finished she put her arm about his neck, and in a clear, unhesitating voice said, "John, dear, we were married by a clergyman in the Church of England; the law of the land recognizes our marriage; I don't care what the Church of Rome says or thinks; *I am your wife.*"

The strain had been terrible, but she held herself in hand until the last word. Then something seemed to snap in her aching heart and she burst into tears. He stood up and folded her in his arms, holding her there until the agony of her weeping had spent itself, kissing her now and then and whispering soothing words. She grew calm again and turned a smiling face towards him.

"I should not have cried so, John. It was very weak of me. Kiss me again and let me hear you say I am yours 'till death us do part.'"

Oh, John Terrance, where are the torturing thoughts, the doubts and fears, that swept like a blizzard over your soul, blinding your eyes, beating the life out of your body and chilling your heart nigh unto death?

See them flee in wild confusion before the radiant face of the woman in your arms. Say no word, harbor no thought to bring them back. They deserve no place in the heart of a man who plighted his troth before a priest in the Living Church. Banish them for ever. Envelop yourself in the impregnable love of the noble woman whose husband you are, and defy the powers that assail you. A voice you will surely hear. *Be sure that it is the voice of conscience.*

The struggle was over.

He held her from him for a moment, her hands shut tightly in his own, then spoke the words she hungered to hear.

"Barbara, girlie, I won't let it make any difference. You are now and always my own little wife."

"Except Thou build it, Father,
The house is built in vain;
Except Thou, Saviour, bless it,
The joy will turn to pain;
But naught can break the marriage
Of hearts by Thee made one,
And love Thy Spirit hallows
Is endless love begun."

CHAPTER XVI.

A BLACK MONDAY.

WHEN a man's mind is beset by disturbing thoughts, and he looks wildly about for something to comfort or to guide him, even though it be only the brightness of the sun, or the beauty of the flowers, or the songs of the birds, it very often happens that just at that particular time every man's back seems to be turned towards him; there is no sunshine, no flowers; and the birds are perched in the branches in silence; and in his distress he tells himself that even the face of God is hidden. And thus it appeared to John when he went about his work on Monday morning.

The affectionate scene with Barbara had not ridded his mind of anxiety; he still felt in doubt, and the dullness of the day aggravated his sufferings. The sky was leaden, the winter air damp and penetrating, the snow seemed dirty, the trees had never looked so bare. He went about his work as one in a dream. When he had occasion to go into the house the sweet face of Barbara cheered him; ah, if he could have that face near him every moment of the day all would be well, he thought. Life would again be the paradise it was only two days ago. Now it

was a hell, the flames burning brighter and spreading as the hours went by. Soon they would consume him.

"Bah! what am I afraid of?" he asked himself, while repairing a plough in the barn. "Barbara says she doesn't care what the Church says or thinks or does, that she is my wife till death."

He continued to hammer the wedge he was driving in with so much vigor that the handle of the tool snapped and he flung down the piece left in his hand in anger.

"Why don't they make things plain, so that a man can understand what they mean?" he went on to himself. "According to the words of the decree the Church doesn't want to separate us, but the priest turns around and tries to frighten us by saying he leaves it with our consciences. Right is right and wrong is wrong all the time. If the Church says our marriage is right, what is there for my conscience to worry about? If there is room for a man's conscience to tell him he is sinning against God, then why does the Church say it is all right? If it is wrong, why can't the Church say so?"

Why fear the Church, John?

"If I am sinning against God there is an *awful hell* for me."

Again did his conscience tell him that if a marriage, such as his, was unholy in the sight of God this year it must have been unholy in the sight of God thirteen years ago. But who was it who said that

a marriage without the Sacrament of Matrimony was unholy?

The Church.

Did his conscience say so?

Not exactly. His thirteen years of married life had been too good, too sweet, to appear in that light now.

Then, if he continued to think it was all right, while the Church, as she evidently did, thought it was all wrong, what would be his position?

But the Church had not said that his marriage was wrong, and he would still be permitted to approach the Holy Table. Well, then, what more could he do than go on as in the past? The Church had done all his thinking for him, and he had been content to let it be so.

"But now she's changing her mind, it seems to me," went on the unhappy man, as he floundered further and further into the darkness.

How do you make that out, John?

"The priest says that the Church does not wish to separate us. Then, as the Church is always right, because the Pope speaks for God, my marriage with Barbara must be right."

Then, where is the change of mind?

"Well," goes on the poor man, "didn't the decree say that after a certain date a marriage like ours wouldn't be recognized by the Church, and the Catholic party would be refused the Holy Table?"

"Doesn't that mean that what was right a few years ago is wrong to-day? How can that be?"

Back again to their lair came the words of the priest, "*I leave the matter with your conscience.*"

He felt like a man entangled in a fence of barbed wire. First he would free one leg from the tearing little spikes, but only to find the other limb held fast; while it was being released an arm would be caught; then, as it was given liberty its companion would be seized. Just when the prisoner thought himself free to move from the dangerous mesh he would find that the needle-pointed jailers tugged viciously at his coat-tail and the battle for freedom must begin all over again.

Oh, to be freed from doubt and fear! Oh, to return to the sweet old days that now seemed so far away! Would it always be like this, he wondered, as he seated himself at the supper table on that Black Monday.

From the lamp above the table there fell a rich red glow. Had the table ever looked more inviting than it did now? Had Barbara ever looked sweeter or calmer? Had the nut-brown curls of Felix ever looked so beautiful? Had his smile ever looked brighter than while he told of the toboggan slides he had had after school? Had the tea-biscuits that Barbara made ever tasted more delicious? Had the sound of Felix' voice when he said grace ever sounded more musical?

He told himself the answer to all these questions was "No."

"What are we going to do with Felix when he gets through school at midsummer?" asked Barbara, as she filled his cup for the third time. (He was so very thirsty.)

"You know what I want to be, father," said the boy, anxious to help out the answer.

"And what's that?" asked John, as if the subject had not been discussed a hundred times.

"You know, dad," said Felix.

"I forget," came the smileless answer.

"His ambition is to be a doctor, but I tell him he would never have the heart to cut off a man's leg," said Barbara, laughingly.

"Oh, wouldn't I?" cried Felix, spiritedly. "I could cut off a head if it was on a boy like 'Snoopy' Mutch, and never feel it."

"I don't suppose you would, but Willie Mutch might," laughed Barbara.

"I might chloroform him if it was his head I was taking off," went on the young gladiator, in tones which seemed to imply that any operation short of decapitation "Snoopy" would have to stand without the aid of an anæsthetic.

"Why not be a farmer?" asked his father, showing interest in the discussion for the first time.

"I don't want to be a farmer," the boy answered, emphatically.

The words carried John back to the days of the first writing-lesson, when the little lad facing him now was five years old, and could write two sentences

of his own composition: "I love my mamma"; "I don't want to be a farmer."

The recollection increased the unhappiness of his mind, and he fought to keep himself from planning out the future. What did that future hold for him?

Barbara wished to bring the matter to a head, and suggested that after the summer vacation Felix be sent to High School to take the Matriculation Course. They could later decide which of the professions he should enter. It was her own desire to see her son a doctor.

"Let us make up our minds now, John, dear," she said, turning a pair of beseeching eyes upon the thoughtful face of her husband.

"Do you want him to be a doctor, girlie?" he asked with the shadow of a smile.

"Yes, I do, dear. I think he would make a splendid physician," she replied.

Again did his defences totter and fall before the winning looks of his wife; again did he feel that his was not the hand to refuse her anything.

"All right, Barbara, girlie, I'm willing if you want it so," he said.

"Hurrah!" cried Felix, with utter disregard for table etiquette.

The meal was just ended, and the boy said the second grace so quickly that to any other than the Divine Being, who understood the pure happiness of his heart, the words must have been a mystery.

At nine o'clock the happy boy went up to his

father to say good-night. Throwing his arms about his neck he kissed him more than once, and each kiss was the signal for a boyish hug.

"I've got the best father in the world, haven't I, mother?" he declared enthusiastically, and turned for corroboration.

Barbara was mending an old coat for her husband at the time the boy asked the question, and, looking up from her work and turning a loving face in the direction of the two, she said, "You have, Felix. Don't forget to tell God so in your prayers to-night, and thank Him that it is so."

When Felix had gone upstairs, John Terrance rose from his seat and began to dress for the road. Barbara looked inquiringly at him.

"Going out at this hour, John?" she asked.

His manner became that of a man caught in the act of doing wrong, and he turned a flushed face to his wife. She dropped her work on her lap and looked as she always looked when inviting confidence.

"I'm worried, girly. I'm going to the priest to get that matter I told you about settled," he said, with evident pain.

She faced him, her lovely eyes piercing into his soul and reading there the secret of his trouble. Her figure was erect, her hands behind her back, her face as calm as usual. Then she spoke, slowly and with a faint quiver in her voice.

"John, dear, I told you last night that I am your wife. You kissed me and said it was so Can the

words of a Roman priest make any difference to the seal which God placed upon our marriage? You don't think they can, do you, John?"

The man in him hungered to rush forward, seize her in his arms and rain kisses upon the beautiful face, but something held him back, and he stood still, sullen, silent.

"John," she went on in a steadier voice, "if your mind is troubled, and you think the priest can give you rest, go to him, dear. I will wait for you to come back."

Without speaking he moved towards the door. She helped him with his coat and found an extra rug for the cutter. Ere he opened the door to pass from the warmth and love of his home into the icy winds of the countryside, he turned to his wife.

"Good-night, Barbara, girlie. It is better this way."

They kissed, and he was gone.

Turning the lamp in the kitchen low, she took her bedroom light and went upstairs. Felix was sleeping, and she passed into their own room. Placing the lamp near the window which looked out upon the Marysville road, she turned it up full, so that he might see its welcome rays on his return. Then, dropping to her knees by the bedside, she laid the matter before the Throne of Grace.

"O God," she prayed, "guide him in the right way. Free his poor, troubled mind from all the doubts that beset it to-day. Lead him to see that

our union was blessed by Thee, and that I, Barbara, am his true and loving wife. Give him strength to resist the tempter, to think and decide for himself. Help him to understand that if his conscience tells him I am his wife he need not fear the awful punishment which he has been taught to believe befalls those who sin. Tell him to do what his heart says is right, and to leave the rest with Thee."

She remained so long on her knees she fell asleep. He found her so on his return after midnight.

He woke her gently.

"I think I was tired when I said my prayers, John," she said, with a brave smile. "Did you see the priest?"

She trembled as she asked the question as if dreading the answer.

"No. He's out visitin' in the country until tomorrow," he replied.

"Thank God for more time," she breathed to herself.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BABBLE OF GOSSIPS.

IF there was one thing in the world that Mrs. Mutch liked more than another it was a talk with Gabriel Tawkesbury; so that when this little woman, whose great philanthropic nature led her to interest herself in the business of other people, entered the general store on the afternoon of the day upon which the events related in the preceding chapter happened, and found the mighty Gabriel sitting doing nothing more than practising the five-finger exercises on the edge of the counter, she told herself that the gods were indeed thoughtful in thus affording her so excellent an opportunity to discuss the weather, and a few other little things, with a gentleman whose opinions carried weight with all but those of different politics. It was these unjust people who had abbreviated the euphonious name of Gabriel and called him simply "Gab."

"It's real cold to-day," began the voluble lady, settling herself for a sojourn.

"It is indeed very cold, ma'am," replied the store-keeper, as he cleared his horn.

"Well, I suppose we can't expect much different

weather at this time of the year," proceeded Mrs. Mutch.

"It wouldn't make a deal of difference, I guess, if we did expect," returned the humorous old storekeeper, looking to see if his caller had seen the wit in his remark.

"You're quite witty, Mr. Tawkesbury," she said.

"I believe I am at times," confessed the complimented one.

"But not nearly as witty as Father McCarthy," continued Mrs. Mutch, glad for this opening to use the priest's name.

This led them both to recall well-known witticisms credited to the father, and when these were exhausted it gave the philanthropic lady the opportunity she looked for.

"Did you hear about the decree that was read in St. Peter's Church last Sunday?" she asked Gabriel.

Mr. Tawkesbury had heard a great deal about it; people would talk when they came into his store, and some had had hard things to say about Father McCarthy's Church.

"Do you know what I think?" Mrs. Mutch asked, in a very solemn manner.

Of course, Mr. Tawkesbury, not being gifted with a faculty for seeing inside a lady's mind, had not the remotest idea of what Mrs. Mutch thought.

"I think the Church of Rome is going too far, Mr. Tawkesbury, that's what I think, and I told Old Man

Deekers as I came along that the sooner he told Father McCarthy what I said the better."

"Do you think he'd care, ma'am?" asked the store angel.

"No, I don't suppose he would. They have such a cold, hard front, haven't they? Mind you, Mr. Tawkesbury, I don't say that there ain't a lot of good Christian people in that Church and a lot of lovely priests, who do far more good among their own people and for less money than many of the Protestant ministers, but there's somethin' wrong with some of the laws of the Church, or the way the laws are carried out, and this last decree about the marriages of Protestants and Roman Catholics is the limit," continued the dear lady.

"Well, of course, ma'am," said Gabriel, "the Roman Church has a perfect right to make laws for its own people, and it seems to me if it thinks a Catholic man or woman is sinning against God by not getting married by one of its priests, why, it seems to me it has a perfect right to say so, and to use whatever means it thinks best to make that man or woman take its view of the matter. Don't you think so, ma'am?"

"No, I don't think so, especially when the Pope begins to interfere with marriages that took place years an' years ago," retorted Mrs. Mutch, indignantly.

"But as far as I can understand, from what I was told by a Catholic customer (we won't mention

names), the decree says that marriages between Protestants and Catholics up to two or three years ago are all right; it only applies to those after that date," said the storekeeper.

"Don't you believe it, Gabriel," said Mrs. Mutch, becoming familiar. "They've got a smart way of twisting things around so as to look like one thing and mean another. Mark my words, you'll hear of men and women leavin' each other some of these days, because they know what the inside of the Roman Church is a great deal better than we do. Old Man Deekers is no saint, but he understands what's behind that decree, and he explained it to me this mornin'. He told me—and he knows, mind you, he's been in the Roman Catholic Church all his life—that if any of the Catholics married by Protestant ministers twenty or thirty years ago have any fear of the Church left in them, the priests will work on them, in that nice friendly way of theirs, until they make them believe they're sinnin' against God by livin' with their Protestant partners, and so frighten them with the awful things that will happen them when they're dead, they'll break up their homes and go off."

This very strong view, strengthened though it was by the authority of Old Man Deekers, did not find a resting-place in Gabriel's interior.

"The priests might succeed with a young man or woman who had been married only a few years before the decree date, or some man or woman looking for

an excuse to leave home, but I don't believe all the churches in Christendom could make a man or woman who had been married, say fifteen or twenty years, smash up the home. It wouldn't be human, ma'am," declared Mr. Tawkesbury, with a sudden thump on the counter which made poor Mrs. Mutch nearly tumble off her seat.

"My goodness, Mr. Tawkesbury, you gave me quite a start!" she cried in alarm.

"I really beg your pardon, ma'am. I felt so sure of what I was saying I had to hammer it home. I always do. Mrs. Tawkesbury used to jump the first few years we were married, but she stands it fairly well now," said the contrite Gabriel.

As Mrs. Mutch had not had the careful training it had been the privilege of Mrs. Tawkesbury to receive, she moved her seat out of the danger zone.

"You don't know the power of the impalpable Pope, Mr. Tawkesbury," she went on, as her alarm departed.

"'Infallible,' I guess you mean, ma'am," interjected Gabriel, politely.

"That's what I said, Gabriel, only you weren't listenin'," snapped the pupil. "As I was sayin', you don't know the power of the—the—Pope of Rome. Why, Ebenezer was tellin' me the other night that hundreds of years ago the popes used to make kings and emperors stand round and do what they were told. I'm tellin' you this, Gabriel, that if they ever began to work on a man's feelin's by

tellin' him he wasn't properly married because a priest hadn't done it, and that he would have awful tortures in purgatory if he kept on livin' with his wife, why they would soon have him so crazy with fear he'd pack up and go quick."

"Well, ma'am, we needn't worry ourselves about it; there's nobody we know likely to get into trouble," said Mr. Tawkesbury, soothingly.

Mrs. Mutch raised her head and regarded the storekeeper for a full minute, as if she were turning over the pages of his diary to see how much or how little he knew. When her eye reached the word "finis," she altered the focus of her gaze and looked out of the window. A load of logs was passing at the time, and she hurried to the door and peered through the glass.

"Well, I do declare if that's not him!" she said, turning to Gabriel.

The storekeeper knew so many "hims" he was at a loss to know which particular "him" the old lady meant.

"Why, John Terrance, to be sure. Who do you suppose I meant?" demanded Mrs. Mutch, irritated at Gabriel's density.

All Gabriel said was "Oh!"

"Yes, you might well say 'Oh!' Gabriel. I'm wonderin', and wonderin', and wonderin' what's goin' to happen that poor man with his sweet wife and curly-headed boy if the priests get after him about this decree business."

"Oh, yes," said Gabriel, brightening up; "they were married by the rector, Rev. Mr. Reid, weren't they?"

"Yes, the loveliest Christian old gentleman around these parts," declared Mrs. Mutch, earnestly. "And yet," she added, "they'll go so far as to say that because he performed it it wasn't a proper marriage. I suppose they'd like to make poor little Felix out to be a—well, I don't like to say it—you know what I mean. My goodness, Gabriel, the more I think about it the more angry I get. Really, I—I—I feel so mad I could go over to Marysville and shout what I think through Father McCarthy's keyhole."

Mr. Tawkesbury had not been in business a number of years without learning how to quieten an excited old lady, and he evidently regarded the present moment critical enough for the administration of a soft drink. He knew he was taking grave chances, because he remembered that while he was talking politics for the purpose of getting the privilege of calling himself postmaster, he used to get dry, and that after a drink he could always go on for another hour.

Mrs. Mutch became collected after the liquid disappeared, and went on quietly.

"You know, Gabriel, I fly off the handle sometimes. I can't help it; but I feel really worried over this business. I don't know how John Terrance is takin' it. He's always quiet, and you can't tell what those quiet ones are thinkin'; but he's been

such a good husband all these years I'd hate to see his Church get on his nerves. Mind you, I don't blame Father McCarthy; he's a nice old gentleman, and no doubt won't do anythin' but what he's told to do. Ebenezer says they punish the priests if they don't do what they're told to do. I'm sure I would be the last woman in Chippendale to wish to see that fine old gentleman get into trouble, but if it was to save that poor man and his wife, I believe I could bear hearin' of his gettin' into hot water—if they didn't put too much mustard in it."

Gabriel came from behind the counter and stood by the side of Mrs. Mutch, laying a rather plump hand on her shoulder.

"Mrs. Mutch," he began, earnestly, "I've known the Terrances ever since old Michael died. I've seen their baby christened; in fact, Mr. Tawkesbury is Felix' godmother; and I've watched the three of them all these years, and I say now that the home life at Hillcrest Farm is the best in the land, and I don't believe that a million popes and a million priests could make John Terrance forget his vows to that sweet little woman, Barbara. I don't believe God would allow it, ma'am. I believe He would rain fire and brimstone on the head of any man who was the means of interfering with the happiness of that home. No, ma'am, I've got faith enough in God to believe that such a thing as you refer to is impossible, ab-so-lute-ly im-pos-si-ble."

Down went the fist!

Up went Mrs. Mutch!

"I beg your pardon again, ma'am. I am a trifle warm."

"You might try a soft drink, Gabriel," suggested the startled lady, with a meaning glance.

"Well," she said, as she got up to go, "there's one thing I'm goin' to do, Gabriel; that is, I'm goin' to watch."

"Yes, ma'am; we'll both watch."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A WILD DREAM STARTLES JOHN.

"I am no woman to put faith in dreams."

—*Harold.*

To use a common, but descriptive phrase, because it suits her case so very well, let us say that Barbara did not "sleep a wink" that night. She told herself a score of times that Barbara Terrance required every moment she could seize to prepare for and later conduct a single-handed battle with the forces, she scarcely knew just then what to call them, which were clawing like wild beasts at the better nature of her husband, and slowly, but surely, taking him further away from her.

Worn out in body and mind, John slept by her side—slept and dreamed.

This brave, clear-headed wife and mother began her task by an appeal to God for wisdom and strength.

"Help me, O God, to do the right thing," she prayed.

All night long she turned the matter over and over in her mind. She knew him better than he knew himself, and she quickly arrived at the cause of his anxiety. It was she told herself, so much that

the words of the decree had made him believe that he was not married in the sight of God, as it was his fear of what the Church would do that troubled him. She believed that, deep down in her husband's heart, he knew that he was properly married; the law of the land had said so. But his fear that the Church was not *wholly* satisfied, because he had not received what *she* called the Sacrament of Matrimony, drove common sense to the winds, and turned him into a cringing, trembling, terrified object, hourly dreading the tortures of hell, if it should happen that he was displeasing *her*. Barbara had more than once heard him say what awful punishment awaited those who disobeyed the Church. He had once told of the physical, as well as the mental, sufferings of the sojourners in purgatory, and she recalled now how his recital had horrified her. And to-night she told herself that his trouble was *fear*.

What could she do to strengthen him, to give him courage, to lead him to decide that their marriage found favor in the sight of God, and to put from him, as bogies of a diseased mind, the threats of the Church and the terrors those threats created?

"I can't love him more than I do now," she told herself; "then what shall I do?"

Was ever a loving wife so bewildered? Their home was a world of love. Not once during their thirteen years of married life had there been a cloud in the sky of their affection; nor had God visited them with any affliction to sadden their hearts and

dim their eyes. They had never found anything to quarrel about; little differences of opinion always ended in John again seeing that Barbara had the sweetest face he ever looked into and the wisest head in the world behind it.

But now a dark, scowling cloud hung over the home, and demons danced about outside, uttering fiendish shrieks and screaming threats that they would soon force an entrance, drive out the light and joy and love, and turn the place into a tomb, dark and cold.

She asked herself whether it would not be advisable for her to see the priest, and to get from him a clear interpretation of the decree. Perhaps John had not understood it; perhaps if Father McCarthy read it to her, and repeated his explanation, she would find that the Church found no fault with their marriage. Ah, that is the first and best thing to do. After that interview she would in all likelihood be able to clear John's mind of every doubt and fear, and very likely the priest would help her, he was such a kind old gentleman.

"Then all will be as it was before," she thought. "He will give me his kind, loving smiles again, and will take me in his arms and kiss me, and tell me how sorry he is for having been so troubled about what was nothing after all, and we will go back to our sweet old days again."

With a violent start that made the old-fashioned wooden bed totter on its legs, and creak, and strain,

and quiver, the man at her side suddenly leapt up from his sleep. In the dim grey light of the early morning she, alarmed into a fit of trembling, could see his wild appearance. His hair seemed on end, his eyes bulged from their sockets, his face was an ashen grey, great beads of sweat appeared ready to roll from his forehead, and his hands gripped the bed covers convulsively.

"Oh, oh, oh!" he moaned, in tones which filled the heart of his frightened wife with sorrow for him. She laid her hands upon him and tried to quiet his shattered nerves, but he seemed not to see her, continuing to stare wildly about him, starting suddenly now and then as if seeing some fiend of darkness, sometimes recoiling in terror as if from an approaching monster.

Barbara realized that he had had a wild dream, and spoke soothingly to him.

"John, dear, your wife is here; see, Barbara is by your side. There is nothing to fear. Come, try to be yourself again. You are at home, at Hillcrest Farm. Felix is sleeping in the next room."

As she spoke the door of their room, which was never tightly shut at night, was pushed gently open, and the figure of their son appeared, his face pale, his little body shaking in its sudden alarm.

"What's the matter, mother?" he asked in an unsteady voice as he moved further into the room.

"Nothing, Felix, dear; your father has had a bad dream, that is all," she replied, calmly.

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Just then the man caught sight of the boy in his pink winter nightshirt, and glared wildly at him.

"He's on fire. Don't let him come near me. He's from there."

"John, John, John, dear, that is only Felix, and this is Barbara, your wife. Touch me."

As she spoke the last words she moved closer to him, and he felt the warmth of her body.

Felix, calmed now by his mother's quiet voice, walked to the other side of the bed and stood near his father, whose appearance had become less wild.

Laying a hand upon the frightened man's arm, his boy spoke to him.

"Father, father, mamma's here."

The boy thought it was the best thing to say. He had long, long ago learned that his boyish troubles fled when his mother was near, and now he sought to allay his father's fears by telling him that the same loving, comforting Barbara was at his side.

In an instant the terrified man was himself again, although the sweat had left his body wet, his hands clammy.

Dropping from his sitting posture, he laid his head back upon the pillow.

"That was a bad dream I had Barbara, girlie—a bad, bad dream," he said, quietly.

Receiving a message from his mother's eyes, Felix slipped from the room without his father having been conscious of his presence, and the two were left alone. She did not wish him to tell her the troublesome

dream, but he seemed intent on doing so. During the telling she lay quite still, knowing, as the tale was unfolded, how it would leave his mind, and dreading that he would regard it as a warning from God.

He spoke slowly. He told her that he had been in the fields when it suddenly grew dark; that a terrific storm came up so suddenly he had no time to run to a place of safety; that the sky was inky black; that thousands of flashes of forked lightning illumined the awful darkness at frequent intervals; that the thunder roared so loud it deafened him; that he could hear great trees crashing down as the lightning struck them; that one by one the surrounding haystacks caught fire, the flames being swept by a mighty wind in the direction of his neighbors' farms; that soon the whole countryside was lit up by blazing property; that horses and cattle rushed in wild confusion from the burning sheds; that the wind whistled doleful tunes that seemed to be filled with taunting laughs; that farmers and their families fled into the snow, the men yelling frantically, the women tearing their hair madly, the children shrieking in despair; that soon every house but his own was in the clutches of the fire demons; that he could see, he knew not how, the inside of their home; that she and Felix were seated at the table, she knitting, the boy working at his lessons; that of a sudden the heavens split in twain, and a mighty thunderbolt came crashing down upon their house, razing it to the ground,

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the debris being licked up by flames; that in that awful moment he heard her voice, telling him that death was parting them, but that she loved him still.

Barbara heard it in silence to the end. He did not feel the little tremors of her body as she shuddered now and then, nor could he see the tears that rained down her cheeks. When he ceased speaking she left his side, and, sinking heavily upon her knees, prayed for guidance.

CHAPTER XIX.

"MARRIED IN GOD'S SIGHT."

THE Rev. Haslem Reid, M.A., had just turned over to page sixty-seven of a volume of Biographical History of Philosophy when the rectory door-bell rang. Mrs. Reid had gone to a meeting of the Women's Guild, and the curate was holding a cottage meeting on the outskirts of the parish, so that the rector was alone in the house. He laid the open book on his desk, removed his glasses, polished them, returned them to his nose, coughed twice, passed into the hall, turned up the gas, then opened the front door.

"Good evening," said a woman's voice.

"Good evening," replied the old gentleman, not recognizing his visitor. "Won't you come in?"

"Thank you, I will," was the reply, and a woman, clad in a long black ulster, and wearing a home-knitted shawl tied tightly over her head and ears, the ends thrown loosely over the left shoulder, entered the hall.

"The wind is very cold to-night. I fancy it must be at least four degrees below zero," went on the rector, as he proceeded to shut and lock the door.

"Well, well, it is Mrs. Terrance. I did not recog-

nize you. How are you? Come into my study; come in, come in."

Barbara threw off the warm shawl and passed into the snug little study, where everything seemed so peaceful. The rector's constant friends looked down from their shelves as though regarding her as an intruder, but the crackling log in the red brick fireplace bade her a cheerful welcome.

"Draw your chair up closer. Your feet must be cold. It is such a long drive from Chippendale. Whenever I take it I suffer terribly with my feet," said the old clergyman, striking the blazing log a dig with an old-fashioned walking-stick which had done duty as a poker for many a year. It caught fire, as it always did; and he blew it out, as he always did.

Before settling himself he altered the position of the reading lamp so that its rays might fall upon the face of the visitor, and leave his chair in the shadow. He liked to observe the features of those he talked to, and this was a favorite plan.

He knew that Barbara had not come from Chippendale on that cold night without a very good reason, and intuitively felt that something had gone wrong.

"Did you come into town alone?" he asked.

"No, I came with my husband. He had a visit to make to-night, and I suggested coming with him and calling on one or two people I know in Marysville. He will meet me at ten o'clock at a friend's house," answered Barbara.

Poor Barbara scarcely knew how to open the subject uppermost in her anxious mind, and the rector used all the harmless arts of his calling to make it easy for her to speak. Every one failed, and for a moment he was at a loss to know what to say next. He had heard of the reading of the *Ne Temere* on Sunday last, and had been given a fairly accurate report of the priest's explanation; but it never entered his head to associate Barbara's visit with the decree. Why should he think of linking the name of the quiet, loving wife of a humble Ontario farmer with a three-hundred-year-old law of the Roman Church, framed to give more power to an already mighty power, and to discipline its people into more abject subjection to a domination that had made the diadems of quaking monarchs tumble off their royal heads, and caused the knees of princes to shake when they wobbled to the throne of their spiritual lord to ask for mercy or crave a favor?

Barbara set his mind at rest by suddenly asking a question.

"Mr. Reid," she said, fixing her thoughtful eyes upon the placid countenance of the old clergyman, "was our marriage honorable in the sight of God and legal in the eyes of the law?"

He did not betray the surprise her alarming question had generated. He knew that he had to deal with a woman who must have fought a severe battle with herself, and perhaps with external forces, before admitting that such a question was necessary.

"Why do you ask, Mrs. Terrance?" he said, quietly.

"The decree read in St. Peter's Church last Sunday has had a terrible effect upon my husband. I don't understand it, and I don't think he does. But as far as I can make out the Church of Rome looks upon mixed marriages as sinful, and although the decree said it applied only to marriages which took place after a certain date, not very long ago, John believes from the priest's words that in the eyes of his Church our marriage was not proper.

"Mr. Reid, please, please explain it to me. Don't spare me. I can bear it."

He did not answer at once, but silently admired the courage that lay behind the words, "Don't spare me." He had known Mrs. Terrance for many years, and had always admired her calm manner, her good judgment, her fearless mind. To-night, in that haven of rest, her face, illumined by the soft rays of the lamp, she looked beautiful, and, what was much more to his mind, good.

"Mrs. Terrance," he began, earnestly, "you were married by a clergyman of the Church of England and with strict observance of the law of the land. Your marriage was not only countenanced by God but was, and is, recognized by the state. To prove this I might say that if you were deserted by your husband the officers of the law could pursue him and bring him to justice; if he married another woman the law would punish him for the crime of bigamy;

if a priest of the Roman or any other Church should try to separate you, the law would punish him. So that you can understand, Mrs. Terrance, that you are married in the sight of God, because one of His duly ordained ministers performed the Holy Ordinance of Matrimony, instituted by God; and in the eyes of the law, because that minister was authorized by the state (there being no just cause or impediment) to marry you."

The words were spoken deliberately and with emphasis. Barbara knew that her feet were upon a rock. Would that her husband believed his to be upon the same foundation.

"Then what did the decree say that might lead John to fear that he had sinned against God because he had not received what his Church calls the 'Sacrament of Matrimony'?" she asked.

"I have read and re-read a copy of the decree, sent to me this morning by a friend in Toronto," he answered, "and I confess that only a mind trained to interpret the ecclesiastical subtleties it contains could begin to divine its real meaning. I do not think that the decree itself would have caused your husband immediate anxiety. In fact, when the words of the decree are taken at their surface value they make out that such a marriage would be all right if performed before the date named for this modification of a very old law to go into force; but I am afraid the parish priest, in his 'explanation'—if I have been rightly informed—made it clear to

his people that there was room for their consciences to tell them that such marriages, although performed fifty years ago, were not holy in the sight of the Church."

"Well, I am sure John must feel in his heart that his marriage was not sinful; we have been blessed so much; God has been so good to us," said Barbara.

"Surely, oh, surely, he must," said the rector, fervently. "Endeavor to cheer him up, try to dispel these fears of his, tell him what I have said about the law. Inform him that the Church of England asserts the validity of such marriages, when duly solemnized, and that she maintains that once consummated they are indissoluble."

"Why has this decree been issued?" asked the perplexed wife.

"We can only assume that this is an attempt made by the ecclesiastics of the Roman Catholic Church to gain more power in Canada—political power. Germany would have none of it, and the Vatican suspended it to preserve peace. Italy passed special legislation to protect the people from the effects of this decree. Canada must do likewise.

"I confess I would not favor our beloved Church being given authority greater than that possessed by the state."

Barbara was comforted by the words. They came from her own minister and she believed them, but dare she hope that John would show like confidence?

She got up to go.

"I am very thankful for your kindness," she said, putting out a hand. "I will take your advice. Pray for me."

The old gentleman took the hand and, looking into the face of the brave woman, told her to hope for the best. He knew his own fears.

"I am sorry, very sorry, that anything should have arisen to mar what I have always regarded as the perfect happiness of your home," he said, ere closing the door.

It was nearing ten o'clock when Barbara reached the home of her friend, Miss Hardly, where John and she were to meet, but there was no sight of him.

Miss Hardly was an old maid. She had not been disappointed in love, because no man had had the temerity to make love to her; and although possessed of many good qualities and an exceedingly sympathetic nature, she had not, as yet, permitted her affections to wander in directions where they might not be appreciated.

"The love of man is the root of all evil," she told Barbara, while they waited for the cutter.

Barbara always laughed at the spinster's views on love and matrimony, and now told her that "some day her heart would go out to a good man."

"God created one good Man and then permitted Him to be crucified on Calvary," came the reply.

"He was a perfect Man," Barbara reminded her.

"I know, and why can't men try to be like Him, instead of seeing how near they can resemble the devil?" said the celibate.

"Many do," went on Barbara.

"Yes, but what miserable creatures the best of them are. How near to the Lord Jesus is the finest type of Christian in the world?" demanded the old maid.

"God only can answer that question," replied Barbara.

"Men, as strivers after the Christ character, are failures," said Miss Hardly.

Barbara turned her sweet face from the partly raised window blind and looked at her companion.

"There is hope for them. Christ died to save failures," she said, quietly.

The clock in the kitchen struck eleven, and Barbara went to the front door. There were no lights on the street, and she could neither see nor hear signs of life.

"John's late," said Miss Hardly, with a yawn.

"I wonder what is keeping him?" mused the anxious wife.

"Met a man, and the two can't stop talking," came the merciless reply. "They talk about women being gossips, but I have noticed that men can talk for four hours about nothing. I went to a town council meeting once."

"John is a very quiet man," said Barbara.

"Then he'll be a good listener, and I'll be bound to say some long-winded Marysviller has him cornered in the cold, talking his head off and freezing his feet."

"Was that eleven o'clock that struck just then?" asked Barbara, unheeding the last remark.

"Yes, and the clock's right," replied Miss Hardly, anxious to cheer things up.

Again did Barbara go to the door and look up and down the street. A cutter was approaching at a smart rate and in another moment it stopped on the opposite side of the street.

"John, I'll be there in a minute," she cried, slipping back into the house to wrap herself up for the cold drive.

The only answer was a wave of the whip.

As she scrambled in beside him and nestled down among the warm rugs he gave the horse a cut with the whip, causing it to leap forward and tear along the snow-covered road at an unprecedented rate.

Barbara, glad to have him near her, began to talk of Miss Hardly, but only received monosyllabic replies. She thought it wise to refrain from making any reference to his visit. She knew that he had intended to go to the priest, and supposed that his silence was the result of that visit. When they were nearing Chippendale they saw a dark object on the road, directly in their path. John reined in his horse.

"Why it's Mr. Lloyd, the curate. He's met with an accident. His horse is lying down," cried Barbara, anxiously.

John slowed down, then stopped.

"Really, it seems providential that Mr. and Mrs.

Terrance should be out driving at this unusual hour," began the unlucky curate.

"Accident?" asked John.

"Dear old 'Clericus' dropped down dead."

"Any warning?"

"None. He just stopped and emitted a neigh—it sounded more like a laugh, then fell down. I took a dive forward and landed in the snow, but without injury."

They hitched the curate's cutter to their own and drew it to Hillcrest Farm, where John and Barbara placed their horse at the young man's disposal.

When the Rector learned of the death of "Clericus" at the breakfast table he grew reminiscent.

"'Clericus' and I have been friends for over twenty years," he said, sadly. "The noble old fellow was most positive in everything he did, loyal to the extent of absurdity, and always determined to do everything in a fixed way."

"He was well and truly named," remarked the curate, as he vigorously buttered a slice of toast.

CHAPTER XX.

A COLD DINNER PROVES APPETIZING.

BARBARA would have suffered death by martyrdom rather than ask her husband what the priest had said during that interview. Nor did he tell her. For two whole weeks he went about his work in silence. In the house he answered questions—and they grew less and less in number as the days went on—in one or two words. Barbara and Felix exhausted every resource at their disposal to rouse him, and failed as often as they tried to make him smile.

"Mother, what's the matter with father?" Felix asked on the second Sunday following the interview.

"I don't know. He is dreadfully worried about something."

"About money?"

"I don't think so—no, I'm sure it is not money."

"Have you asked him, mother?"

"No."

"Why don't you?"

"If he wishes me to know he will tell me without being asked."

Felix was silent for a long while before he put the next question. Then, fixing his soul-searching eyes

upon his mother he asked, "Is it about that decree, mother?"

Barbara had taught her boy to search for the truth and to pursue it till found. She was now realizing how well he had learned his lesson. To be consistent she must tell him what he wanted to know.

John was at mass.

She thought the matter over carefully. Felix was twelve years old, clear-headed and brave. If he knew all she might find in him a valuable agent. At any rate, she was sure of his unqualified sympathy, and that was what her poor heart craved just now. Yes, she would tell her boy. She did so, carefully abstaining from uttering one word that could be construed as a criticism of her husband's conduct or the attitude of his church, if that were responsible for his wretchedness.

Felix did not remove his penetrating eyes from his mother's face while she spoke, nor did she flinch at his steady gaze. She was opening her heart to the best friend she had on earth, but hardly knowing it.

"There now, Felix, you know as much as I do. What shall we do?"

She asked the question carelessly, as though not anticipating an answer. She had unburdened herself to a boy. But the boy was a product of her own training and, like his mother, was never the author of rash speeches. Her recital had left him with one very clearly defined fact in his mind, viz., that his

father's conduct was giving his mother pain and, whatever the cause, it should be removed. There is no doubt had he had a boy to deal with instead of a man, and that man his father, Felix would have shaken him like a rat and commanded immediate improvement. He could see little in his father's attitude to merit sympathy. If the "trouble" were honest, he reasoned, it was his father's duty and privilege to make it known to Barbara, who would at once take the lion's share from his shoulders. If it were not a care his wife could be asked to share, then the cause of it should be removed without gloves or ceremony. In fact, it is not at all unlikely that had Barbara blamed Father McCarthy Felix would have sought an opportunity to inflict chastisement upon the priest. He told himself that his mother's heart had been wounded by an unknown hand and that Felix Terrance, aged twelve years, was now in a state of war with an unknown enemy.

When John came in from church he changed his clothes and went out to the barn where he worked nearly all the afternoon, overhauling implements. Felix called him to dinner but he made no answer. Barbara kept the meal hot until it was completely spoiled then summoned courage to go out and see why he had not come in. This was the third time he had done so during the past two weeks. She approached the barn door timidly, as a nervous spectator would approach a lion's cage expecting at every step to see the great beast spring up, tear off the bars and seize its victim.

He was working on the binder as she entered and looked up when the door opened. There was no smile to greet her and when she saw him knit his brows her heart felt a sudden chill.

"Won't you have something to eat, John?" she asked, outwardly calm, but inwardly trembling with fear—of what, she could not tell.

"No, thanks," came the cheerless reply.

She watched him in silence for some time, then turned to leave the barn. Oh, how trim and sweet she looked on that well swept floor.

A small trap-door above the entrance to the barn was partly open and threw down enough light for him to see his work. Scores of sparrows, happy in so warm a winter retreat flew back and forth overhead and chirruped in their delight. A mountain of hay stood at her back, a hill of loose, clean straw lay before her. Amidst it all Barbara looked so neat, so trim, so sweet, so calm. A little sigh escaped her as she moved from him and he heard it.

"Barbara!"

She turned, certain that her ears deceived her, but no, there he was looking straight at her, a smile where the lines of pain had been.

"John."

"I guess I'll have some dinner. I must shake this off. It's gettin' worse," he said, wiping his hands on a piece of old coat that lay near him.

Feix had watched his mother go out to the barn, and did not leave the window until he saw the two nearing the house.

"She's got him," he said to himself, as if Barbara had been angling for an elusive fish in the river and had just landed it.

Felix opened the door as they reached the step and turned a glowing face to them. He read joy in his mother's countenance.

They made the best of the spoiled dinner, the dried-up meat seemed to suddenly ooze gravy, the half-cold potatoes were so hot Barbara could hardly get them down (or was it because something else was in her throat stopping the way), and the cold currant pudding tasted so nice to Felix he wondered that people ever thought of eating it hot. As for John, he ate so much Felix found him unfastening a vest button and chided him.

"How would you like to go for a drive, the snow's deep, the sleighin's good, and the mercury's just one below?" asked John, looking out upon the restful winter scene. February was just closing and the snow had never left the ground. The sun was getting warmer every day, though, and soon the cutter runners would scrape the roads. To-day was clear and sparkling—everything sparkled.

The eyes of Barbara and Felix sparkled now, and the offer of a drive was accepted at once.

Oh, how the spacious cutter sped along. Barbara snuggled up to John's side and Felix buried himself in the robes—all but his head, which he required for observation purposes. John turned off the Marysville road and struck across country until he reached

at a bend in the frozen river, then followed the ice-gripped waterway for an hour. Now and then they passed someone they knew and added recognition. Felix knew the country and told his father many things about the farms they passed. On their return journey they met Barbara's brother Jim and wife Hannah. Hannah's nose was blue. The new fur coat given her last year had failed to warm her extremity, and Felix thought that if he had a long nose as Aunt Hannah he would get his money's worth for it.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DEATH OF WIDOW TERRANCE.

THE brightening up of John Terrance on that cold-dinner Sunday was short lived. On the following morning word came over from Marysville to say that Widow Terrance was ill and wished to see him. The news threw John into such a pitiful state of nervousness, Barbara determined to go with him. It was just after breakfast that the message came, and, leaving everything in the hands of Felix, they drove over to Marysville at a record-breaking speed. The news seemed to have stunned John into silence. Barbara tried to rouse him.

"She may not be very ill," she said, hopefully, but received no answer. Later she tried again—"perhaps it is one of her weak spells." The man at her side remained in moody silence.

"I suppose Mrs. Laly will be with her," the wife ventured again, but with no better success.

As they neared Marysville she pressed his arm affectionately, saying "John, dear, don't worry so until we know how she is."

She might have gone on trying to comfort him and expecting an answer for the rest of the journey

without success, but she concluded that perhaps her words only disturbed him and lapsed into silence.

At the cottage all was quiet. They learned that at an early hour that morning the widow had been seized with paralysis and was now lying in a state of helplessness. The doctor had shaken his head when Mrs. Laly, who performed household duties for the widow occasionally, asked him if the attack were serious.

"She may live; she may die," he said.

The profundity of this utterance was so great it threw the poor woman into something resembling a fit, which could only be relieved by a dose of medicine from a bottle bearing the name of Hogan. After a season, she recovered enough strength to resume her duties in a manner that seemed to say there might be a relapse at any moment.

At seven o'clock Father McCarthy had been summoned to administer Extreme Unction, and when John and Barbara entered the darkened bedchamber he was standing at the old woman's side, making the sign of the cross and praying in a tongue Barbara could not understand. The widow's face was white and shrivelled, her eyes closed as if in death. There was scarcely a movement of the body, one side of which was numbed by the seizure. Mrs. Laly led them into the room and stationed herself near a bedpost, a corner of her apron held tightly in one hand ready for emergency. The priest's eyes were closed and he did not open them immediately.

A crucifix stood upon a table near the bed and added great solemnity to the scene.

John followed Mrs. Laly in, Barbara coming at his heels. When he saw the motionless figure of his mother and heard the words of the priest uttered in monotonous tones, he stopped suddenly, dropped on one knee, then crossed himself and remained bowed in prayer. This was done so suddenly and Barbara was so unprepared for it she nearly tumbled over him. Quickly checking herself, she stood waiting. The noise of her irregular footfall appeared to have disturbed the priest. When he saw the kneeling figure of the widow's son he walked over to him and made a sign above his bowed head, as if blessing him, and went out of the room without acknowledging Barbara. As he passed Mrs. Laly that good lady dutifully bent one knee and crossed herself. Barbara felt like an intruder and hesitated to go further into the sick-room. But just then John rose from his kneeling posture and went up to his mother's side. Emboldened by his act Barbara walked to the other side of the bed and looked upon the silent sufferer. Her figure was erect, her face pale and calm, and she tried to make her husband feel her sympathy. He laid a hand gently on his mother's wrinkled brow and uttered the most sacred of all earthly names.

At the sound of her son's voice the widow opened one eye. The other had been closed by the merciless stroke of paralysis. She made a vain attempt to

smile. The result was painful to witness, and tears welled into John's eyes. Barbara saw this and her loving heart ached for them both. She realized that her husband sorrowed deeply for his mother's condition but knew not how to comfort him.

John looked over at her and she saw in his tearful glance an invitation to speak to his mother, who seemed to be unconscious of her presence. In an instant Barbara had bent over the stricken woman and breathed into her ear gentle and loving words.

While she was speaking the unparalysed side of the patient gave a perceptible shudder and the widow closed her eye.

Barbara drew back as if stung by an adder; her sensitive nature told her she was not a welcome visitor. John saw what had happened and how his mother's coldness had affected her.

"Mother," he said, bending over the pillow, "Barbara is here; won't you speak to her?"

The paralysed woman opened her eye again and looked as if she wished to tell him something in secret. The expression on her face was full of entreaty. He could not tell what she meant and Barbara, seeing her strange look and his bewilderment, moved silently away and stood in a darkened corner of the room. Mrs. Laly was still at the foot of the bed, a silent spectator of the scene being enacted, devouring it with avidity.

Seating himself again on the bed John bent his head so that his mother's partly paralysed lips might

touch his ear. For a moment he remained thus, then raised himself slightly and cast an agonizing look in the direction of Barbara. Oh, what anguish was in that look! It seemed to contain the pains of a tortured soul. In that moment he had become an old man. Deep furrows had been plowed into his brow by a mysterious hand, and an unknown power had drawn in his cheeks and forced his eyes almost from their sockets.

Her back was turned to him when he raised himself but she felt that look and turned to meet it.

Oh, God, that a wife should ever have to face a look like that! It cut her through and through and she almost fell. He saw her stagger and rose from the bed to go to her assistance, but before he could reach her she seemed to be herself again. The expression that had frightened her remained upon his face. As he neared her he spoke—"Leave us alone."

Summoning all her courage, she tottered rather than walked from the room, followed closely by Mrs. Laly who, as soon as she was in the hallway, shut the door behind her and resumed that statuesque attitude she had maintained so successfully at the bedpost.

Barbara passed into the little sitting-room.

When Widow Terrance and her son were alone the patient opened her eye. Her lips moved and John drew near. Bending over her as before, he heard again the words that lined his brow and overwhelmed his soul.

"Beware ye; the priest tills me she's not your-r wife."

He nerved himself to contradict her, and in a husky whisper said, "She is, mother."

"I till ye she's not; ye had no sacrament. If ye live wid her ye'll be scourged in hell."

It took a mighty effort to get out the words but they came with telling force and stabbed him to the quick. The strain upon her shattered frame had been severe and a great sweat came out upon her brow. Her eye rolled wildly as if seeking something that was not there. Her son lost control of himself and fell forward, his face sinking into the pillow, his sobs so loud that the woman on guard at the door heard them. His mother tried to raise a hand to touch him. Her tongue was still free and her lips moved again.

"Save your-r sowl, lave her," she said in a faint voice. The words reached his ears and he started up suddenly, his face haggard, his eyes like balls of fire.

"I can't, mother."

The contortions of the dying woman's face became hideous and the strong man shuddered. Was he torturing her?

He sank to his knees.

"O blessed Mary, Mother of Mercy, Mother of my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, tell me what to do," he prayed.

He looked up and saw her eye watching him.

His heart ached for her in her terrible helplessness. He could have shouted in his pain. He moaned in his compassion.

The lips were moving again but the voice had grown so faint he could scarcely hear her words.

"Ye—sin—a-gain-st the Chur-r-ch and lose yer-r sowl. Yer-r poor owld—dyin'—mother wants to save yer-r from ever-las-tin' fire."

A slight tremor, a twitching of the eyelid, a faint sigh and the soul of Widow Terrance left its mortal home.

A heavy thud brought the doorkeeper and Barbara into the room. Barbara's heart told her all and she breathed a prayer for strength. Mrs. Laly cried aloud when she knew her old friend had left this world of woe and then helped Barbara to revive the unconscious man. On opening his eyes he beheld the anxious face of his wife. Rising to his feet rather quickly for a man who had been stunned into unconsciousness he pushed Barbara to one side and addressed Mrs. Laly.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CHURCH SUPPLANTS BARBARA.

JOSIAH MILDMAN enjoyed the distinction of being the only undertaker in Marysville. We have taken the liberty of using the word "enjoyed" because the news of a sudden or long delayed death in the town never failed to bring out a smile upon a face that at all other times looked as if it had been washed in tears. It may have been because during his sojourn of five years in this extraordinarily healthy town, so few people had made use of the "first-class line of caskets always in stock," that he saw little to laugh at; or, his tombstone countenance may have been chiseled into sadness by the melancholy fact that the sorrowing relatives of so many of his "cases" had looked upon him as a philanthropist, and treated him accordingly. Nevertheless, the news of another death, and the prospect of business picking up, always brought out the smile, which, at all other seasons, hid itself in the sombre caverns of his interior. Despite its surroundings it never lost its freshness and came into view when required, looking like highly polished alabaster. Its owner was a large man, tipping the scale at two hundred and forty pounds, so that it might safely be said that

this solitary expression of joy had commodious apartments.

He had the goodwill of all men, but was never invited out to tea; although it was on the records of Marysville that the secretary of a social society once sent him an invitation to a dance and that when he framed his two hundred and forty pounds of melancholy in the doorway of the hall, the orchestra began to play out of tune and continued to mix Beethoven and Cohen in heartrending fashion, until he took the picture out of the frame and went home. After that the only social events he attended were those held at cemeteries.

There was a Mrs. Mildman, a very thin and very cheerful lady, whose discouraging work it had been for twenty-three years to cheer up her husband between funerals. After they had been married ten years she urged him to apply for the position of floor walker in a departmental store in Toronto; she thought his figure was impressive enough for such a position. But when the manager saw him he said there were no vacancies, after which he turned to his secretary and said, "Jones, there's a born undertaker."

It is, therefore, necessary for us to say that on the morning of Widow Terrance's death Jonah Mildman brought the smile from its sepulchral surroundings and gave it a brief vacation.

"She's dead at last," was how he made the sad announcement to his wife.

The news had been brought to him by a man who had made a wager with another that he could make the undertaker smile, and who had been accompanied by his sceptical friend to see how he lost his money.

"Rather sudden, wasn't it?" asked the cheerful lady.

"Sudden, and I've been waiting since her last sickness," exclaimed the undertaker, surprised that his wife should display such gross ignorance of the trade.

"I'll be able to meet that casket note," he said cheerfully. "Let's see now," he went on, "there's a 'child's' and two 'adults' downstairs. I suppose they'll want everything of the best and—"

"I guess she was nicely fixed—good insurance and an income from the farm," broke in his wife.

"Oh yes, they've got enough to do everything up nicely."

"Perhaps the Church will get it all."

"If it does the son will pay."

"I heard that the priest had been to the cottage with a lawyer when she was ill last time."

"Well, you never can tell. The Church would tell her she'd rest better if she handed over all her money."

"We've got to believe something to keep us happy."

According to the good lady's reasoning her cheerless husband must have seemed to be the most inveterate of all sceptics.

"I'd be better off if I believed less in the promises the relatives of the deceased make," went on the undertaker reflectively.

"Oh, well, I guess at a time like that the family thinks that nothing's too good for the dead."

"And no time too long for the undertaker to wait."

"We've always had enough to eat, Josiah."

"I'll line them myself after this—that'll save a bit."

Clearly they each referred to a different sort of lining.

"Here's John Terrance coming over," exclaimed Mrs. Mildman as she looked from the window.

'Twas then that the undertaker released the smile from captivity and allowed it one whole minute of unrestrained frolic in the graveyard of his face. It climbed backwards and forwards over his "broken pillar" nose, and tumbled about his marble slab cheeks, and took sudden dives into his vault-like eyes, and just as suddenly scrambled out again, and wriggled about the corners of his mouth, which looked for all the world like a newly opened "six by nine."

At the end of its holiday it went back into the caves.

"Mr. Terrance, let me tell you how sorry I am to hear of this," said the undertaker in greeting his caller.

John had come direct from the cottage and found

it hard to speak about his mother's death, but arrangements had to be made for the funeral and there was no one else to make them. He found the undertaker ready to relieve him of all anxiety in that respect, and after turning a pair of inflamed eyes upon the "handsomest casket made," he left everything in the willing and expert hands of the man whose business it was to bury the dead.

"Let everything be the best," said the bereaved son as he bade the undertaker good-day.

"That's what they all say," sighed the melancholy man to himself, "but I'll get this, I think," he added, in a more hopeful voice.

When John entered the cottage he found that Barbara had been locked out of the room in which the body of the widow lay. Her face pale and her eyes swollen with weeping, she received him in the little sitting-room. Immediately after his departure she had begun to render what aid she could to Mrs. Laly, who had brought in another neighbor to prepare the body, but her first efforts in that direction were rudely repulsed by the zealous Mrs. Laly.

"Ye'd better not touch her; I know she didn't like ye," said the good lady to Barbara.

"Better get out; John'll be here soon and I know what he thinks about ye," she added before the heart-stricken wife could speak.

Barbara held her peace and left the room. On finding herself alone she gave way to the tears which had been held in check so long. She realized in that moment of anguish that the religious gulf betwixt

her husband and herself was greater and uglier than she had ever dreamed; she saw now that she was despised by these friends of the widow. Of course she cried, what woman would not?

"They told me I must not help," she said as John entered.

She spoke hurriedly, anxious to explain why he found her idle. He did not express surprise at what she told him, nor did he express anything else that might be construed as feeling. His entrance had been heard by the women in the bedroom and the door was opened at once to admit him. Without speaking to his wife he passed into the chamber where his mother lay in her last sleep. There he told Mrs. Laly to see to everything and returned to Barbara.

Conquering all other feelings she turned bravely to him and, with outstretched hands, implored him to find in her a wife yearning to comfort and console.

"I know how you grieve, John, dear," she said brokenly, "but don't let your grief shut me out of your life. Let me share it with you."

He scarcely knew how deep a meaning lay behind her words. His brows had not been furrowed by the death of his mother so much as by the awful charge she had laid upon his soul. And now he knew not how to act. Tempted to go forward and seize her outstretched hands, he was held back by a vision of the widow in her last moments. Again and again he heard her words, "Lave her, the priest tills me she's not your-r woife."

Knowing naught of the widow's cruel utterances, Barbara attributed his moody manner to the suddenness of his mother's death and stumbled blindly on in her efforts to comfort him.

"Is there anything I can do?" she said beseechingly and advancing a step nearer.

The struggle within him became fiercer every moment. The sadness of his wife's face, the memories of past years pressed hard upon him. There stood the woman whose love he could not doubt, her hands held out to take him to her bosom. The vision of the dying woman grew fainter; her words less distinct; the birds of love were filling his ears with their joyful music, the darkness of night was passing away, he could see the sunlight of the morning in her face. He would go to her; he would ignore his mother's words and threats; he would defy the Church.

She saw the change creep over his countenance as the light of day dispels the clouds of night and hungered to receive him.

"John, dear, come," she cried, with feverish longing.

"My son, in the hour of thy grief the Church opens her arms to comfort you. Beware, lest the Tempter turns you away."

It was the voice of the priest and both started in alarm, so silent had been his entrance. Barbara's arms remained outstretched but the man before her turned to take the priest's extended hand.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JOHN DEFIES THE PRIEST.

JOHN turned to Barbara and bade her go home alone.

"I'll stay here till after the funeral," he said, huskily. The priest and he then passed into the bedroom. The women had performed their sad offices and were now seated, one at each side of the bed, watching the corpse with such intentness that one could easily be led to suppose they thought that a miracle might be performed at any moment and the widow sit up and speak. Two candles had been lighted and burned steadily at the head of the bed, their soft rays falling upon the sunken features of the dead woman.

A small crucifix lay upon the widow's bosom.

Father McCarthy motioned to the women to go out that he and John might be alone with the dead. They obeyed the signal at once and accompanied their departure with a sudden outburst of grief, but whether it was occasioned by sorrow for the dead, or because of their being denied the privilege of seeing what took place between the sorrowing son and the priest, it is hard to say. But if the latter, then their grief was quickly assuaged by the thin-

ness of the door and the uninterrupted view to be obtained through the keyhole.

Unconscious that this particular door possessed at least two of the five senses peculiar to the human, Father McCarthy approached the head of the bed and after "prayers and signs" took a candle from the table and held it near the dead face. John was on his knees at the other side of the bed, but looked up at the sudden glare of light. In a voice so full of solemnity that it struck terror to the heart of the kneeling man the priest addressed him.

"My son, there are traces of anguish upon this poor face. You were with her when her spirit fled. What word did she leave with you?"

John looked helplessly into the face of his confessor. He knew that the question must be answered without equivocation; he knew that it opened the door to his heart.

"Oh, Father," he cried in his agony, "she told me Barbara was not my wife—that I must leave her. O God, this torment is killin' me!"

Just then the door gave unmistakable signs of intelligence, and the priest, anxious to prevent intrusion, opened it suddenly. His alarm was unwarranted, no one sought admission, and the two women were sitting at the window of the outer room, their faces buried in their aprons. Closing the door again he turned the key, unconsciously leaving it at an angle which rendered its socket useless as an opera glass.

Turning again to John he told him to search his heart.

"Does your heart tell you that those shriveled lips uttered untruth, my son?" asked the priest, laying a finger upon the mouth of the dead mother.

"I don't know, Father, I don't know."

"Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be fruitful in the land."

"Oh, tell me if what she said was true."

"Your conscience must do that, my son."

"I can't decide; I hate to leave her—I can't, I can't."

The wretched man cried aloud and hid his face in his hands. The priest tried to comfort him.

"The Church is ever ready to forgive and to welcome back into her fold the repentant."

"Oh, Father, tell me, have I sinned?"

"The sins of men renew the pains of Calvary."

"But say, oh, say, if I have sinned."

"Every hour of unrepentance brings back the pains of crucifixion to the Heart of Jesus."

"Did mother tell the truth?"

"She loved you deeply and was concerned much about the welfare of your soul."

"Oh, Father, tell me, tell me, she was mistaken."

"For her errors she herself must answer."

"She said you told her that Barbara was not my wife."

"The law of the land makes no such charge against you."

"But the Church, Father, the Church, what does she say?"

The priest walked over to him and laid a hand gently upon his burning head.

"My unfortunate son," he said, more solemnly than before, "if, when you have examined your conscience, you find that you have sinned and you incite yourself to a hearty sorrow for your offence against God, and make a firm resolve to amend, then confess. The Church in her great love for your soul offers you absolution."

Turning a haggard face up to the priest the miserable man implored him again and again to set his fears at rest.

"The law of the Church is plain; it is for your conscience to decide these matters. Be careful, my son, God knows your heart."

This last shaft drove the bewildered man into a tumult of perplexity and he sprang suddenly to his feet. The priest fell back a pace, alarmed at the angry look upon his face. John, now thoroughly aroused at what he regarded as the priest's persistent refusals to answer the one great question he could not answer for himself, glared angrily at the Father and seized one of his shoulders roughly.

"I defy ye," he shouted in his madness.

The color fled from the face of Father McCarthy and he staggered under the weight of the angry man's hand and would have fallen had he not suddenly caught hold of the woodwork of the bed. He

was an old man and unable to make much showing of strength. But he rallied quickly, the color returned to his cheeks and his eyes blazed with the fires of indignation. Never before had man's hand been raised against his person, and in this moment of outrage his heart felt sick. What had he done to merit such an insult? His daily life had been one round of service for the Church. He had suffered poverty for her in years gone by; to-day there came this blow. He could not return it; he would bear it for her sake, even as he had borne the days of poverty.

The fires of wrath left his eyes as quickly as they had been kindled. The man before him saw the change; his anger died of a sudden, a cold sweat of fear wet his forehead, his body trembled. What was this awful thing he had done? Surely he was mad to strike this priest of God. Oh, that he could cut off and cast aside the guilty member.

The priest watched the rigid, defiant man collapse into a cringing, humble penitent and marvelled not at the transformation.

Drawing his outraged person up to its full height, his silver locks shining in the candlelight, his eyes filled with a kindly glow, he raised his right hand as if commanding peace, and the man before him bowed his head.

"At the bidding of the devil you have raised your hand to strike a priest of the Living God. Ponder well the enormity of your sin, then ask forgiveness."

The contrite man clasped his hands before him and raised a face full of sorrow to the priest.

In that moment the terrified penitent saw the heavens open and heard the thunders of God's wrath as they roared about his ears, filling his heart with terror. Oh, that he had not done this terrible thing! Would God ever forgive?

The priest laid a hand upon his head and in a clear, steady voice told him to kneel.

"My son," he said in gentle tones, "I forgive. May God forgive you for a greater sin."

Ere John had risen from his knees the priest had left the room.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BLOW FALLS ON THE HOME.

"They were dangerous guides, the feelings—
She herself was not exempt."

—*Locksley Hall.*

WIDOW TERRANCE'S funeral was conceded by all to be the "largest" in the history of Marysville. Josiah Mildman crowned himself with melancholy glory, and when he laid his head upon his pillow at night he did so with the air of a king fresh from coronation. There was no smile, naught but a great and all-pervading glow of satisfaction. Like more cheerful heroes, he had done his best and so earned the prize. Nothing had been forgotten; no detail, be it ever so small, had been omitted. The crepe rosette and streamers on the door of the cottage had been placed there by a master hand, and hung in such graceful folds that no frolicsome wind of heaven had dared disturb their sombre symmetry. The casket in which the poor old body lay was of polished oak, its final polish being given by the past master's hand. It shone like a mirror, so that those who gathered about the dead saw their faces reflected in its surface. The solid brass mountings were so solid that neither the ravages of time nor the evolutionary changes

of the earth were likely to injure them for many ages. These adornments glistened in the dim light of the chamber of death. The inscription plate had been lettered by that same clever hand and told those who gazed thereon that "Norah, the relict of the late Michael Terrance, had died at the age of seventy-five years." Her head, crowned with snowy hair, had been pillowed on a mound of finest linen and her crippled hands crossed upon the fine embroidery of her robe.

Let the widow sleep!

On the day of the funeral cutters poured into Marysville from every direction. Catholic and Protestant for miles around came to see and to be seen. Old men and women who had known Michael Terrance came to pay their "last respects" to his widow and exchange notes of early days when Michael and Norah Terrance toiled bravely to make the land yield her increase. Many were the stories related of those early days, stories which filled the heart with sadness and the eyes with tears. Old women recalled the many journeys Michael and Norah Terrance had made to the cemetery to watch another little casket lowered into the earth. They had mingled their tears with those of the brave-hearted parents in their sorrow and had rejoiced at the coming of another little stranger. Only John had been left, and to-day he stood in the sacred Church of St. Peter clad in sombre black, beside the casket of his mother, his eyes red and swollen, his

face drawn. The notes of the organ grated on his ears and the solemn requiem mass brought him little comfort. His was a greater torture than those about him knew, and he must needs bear the weight alone.

The priest walked around the casket blessing the dead and the sweet aroma of incense roused the wretched man from his stupor. In that moment he heard again the words of his dying mother and shuddered. The priest's voice sounded nothing more than a mumble, the meaning of the mass was lost to him.

The sun shone that day but he cared nothing for its light, its warmth, its message of gladness and hope. The cemetery was bleak. A mantle of snow still lay upon the surrounding graves, and the newly dug earth appeared as a blemish upon the silent whiteness of the scene. The press at the graveside was great and his feet were driven to the edge of the yawning cavity. His coonskin coat failed to keep his body warm. His very heart was chilled.

As the casket was lowered he sobbed aloud and seemed about to fall, but friendly arms supported him.

Let the widow sleep!

While John attended his mother's funeral a very different scene was being enacted at Hillcrest Farm. Repulsed at the cottage, where she had sought to aid and comfort, Barbara returned to her home and remained there with Felix. She had thought that John might drive over for the boy on the day of

the funeral but no sound or sign had come from him. Felix cried a little when his mother told him of his grandmother's death, but grieved most that his father should not come for them on the day of the funeral. This he failed to understand, nor did Barbara explain. She had seen her outstretched arms declined by the man she had sheltered in her loving heart for fourteen years and the hand of a priest accepted in their stead, and felt her sorrow deeply. In her heart she was glad her boy had been spared the attendance at the cottage, where she knew he would have been regarded as an intruder, a stranger, "beyond the pale." For a time she had been tempted to take Felix to the cottage and to insist upon being near her husband in the hour of bereavement, but she recalled with pain that he himself had bade her leave him; she could not, therefore, without a sacrifice of self-respect, thrust herself upon a company of women in whom she found no sympathy, from whom she would receive no welcome. But even the risk of incurring their displeasure would have been borne, and borne cheerfully, had there not been the ugly fact that her own husband had turned from her and chosen the Holy Roman Church to be his comforter. What was the love of a faithful woman living in the restful little village of Chippendale when compared with the all-absorbing affection of a great organization whose seat of government was in a foreign land, whose rulers spoke a foreign tongue?

Barbara told herself that she and Felix were pitied, if not despised, by those now gathered about the casket of the dead, whose words of sympathy her husband understood. She would wait for his return from an atmosphere, strange to herself, but comprehended and appreciated by him, and would welcome him with loving arms when the earth had received his mother. He would know again how much she loved him, how deep and lasting was her sympathy, how great her readiness to share his grief. He had been blinded by a mist of tears, had been stunned into not seeing that she of all others was the one whose hands should smooth his cares away. Let him return soon from the coldness of the graveside and find the indwelling warmth of his home.

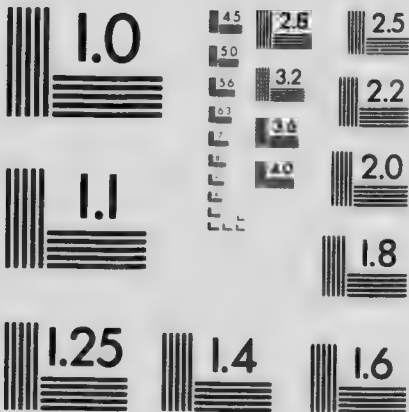
During the hour of the funeral Barbara and Felix sat in the quiet of the parlor and talked in little more than whispers. She saw the figure of her husband as it moved amid the scene of death, and sorrowed for him. Felix seemed restless. He too realized that his father suffered in those hours and he longed for his return. Barbara felt the sadness more and more as the moments passed, and tried to play a hymn appointed by her own Church for use at a service for the burial of the dead, but her fingers failed to find the notes, and she gave up the task. During the attempt Felix kept his eyes on his mother and thought what a beautiful woman she was, and how he loved her.

John came home that night through a blinding snowstorm. The cutter belonged to a friend in Marysville, and horse and driver nearly lost their way. Thrice he was ditched and rolled into the snow. At times the wind was so strong he could scarcely breathe, and more than once the horse dropped from sheer exhaustion. The snow was fine, more like sleet, and beat upon his face like atoms of steel, cutting into the flesh and making it bleed. His feet felt like two curling stones. Neither he nor his horse could see a yard ahead; they might as well have been lost on a prairie. But the courageous animal struggled on, straining every muscle to make headway, and only stopping to take breath. Afraid to sit still he stood erect in the cutter and swung his arms about to keep the blood in circulation. At times he grew angry with the horse, and cut its ice-coated sides with the whip that had become a supple icicle. After each lashing the poor beast dashed off at a tangent which ended in a spill. After one of these ditchings the unnerved horse refused to go further. The driver's temper knew no bounds, and horse and man fought for mastery, the storm raging about them, the cutter filling with snow. He seized its head roughly and tried to whip it into submission, but only succeeded in raising its anger so that it reared and tried to bring him down. He did fall once, but managed to keep clear of the angry animal's feet. Had they reached him the horse would have won the fight.



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But the driver's arm was strong, the whip held out, and half an hour later a vanquished, dispirited horse, its body cut, its head bruised, its nerves all gone, dragged the conqueror through the gate at Hillcrest Farm.

As he drew near the house John saw a light burning in the parlor window, and knew it had been placed there for him. He stabled the punished horse immediately, and went to the door of his home. They heard him as he stamped the snow from his feet, and hastened to let him in.

The storm increased in fury, the wind whistling in the corners of the roof and making the chimney stack quiver. Drifts of snow grew higher and deeper every moment, and trees creaked and strained under the tyranny of the wind.

Let the storm rage on! Within his home there is light and warmth and love.

The table had been laid for supper; the kettle steamed on the stove; some of the lids were red hot; a big brown jug of cocoa, made as only Barbara could make it, kept the kettle company; an arm-chair and a pair of wool-lined slippers waited for someone; the smell of hot biscuits greeted that same person; but what was more, oh, so much more than all these good things, there was Barbara, looking just the same as ever, waiting to receive him; and Felix, too, with cheeks as red as any fire, and a smile of welcome.

Amidst it all he stood in sullen silence. He had

conquered a horse so well that it now stood as silent (but not as sullen) as himself, smarting from the cuts of his whip, but there was within him a greater, more treacherous beast he could not down. Its strength and subtlety were becoming too much for him. As he had used his strength upon the horse, so did this antagonist to his better nature wield the lash.

He saw no love in the scene before him. It was a wonder that he came home at all. The enemy within would have him believe it was *conscience* that blinded his eyes to the love in that scene; whereas it was *conscience* that had brought him home, and deceit and invention that blurred his vision. He had not answered their greetings as he entered, but began at once to remove his coat and boots.

Felix went to his mother's side and she put an arm about his neck. They stood thus before him—a picture that would have made a painter famous. But its beauty, its meaning, its power were all wasted on him. He was hearing a priest's warning, a dying mother's words, the mournful thud of earth upon a coffin, and seeing a picture of himself suffering the tortures of hell because he had sinned against the Church.

Barbara had not passed through the last two weeks without seeing that her husband was being lured from her by an invisible hand. She knew too well that he had made terrific efforts to convince himself that every argument against his desire to continue as her husband was wrong, but that the priest and

his mother had so played upon the fear and superstition with which he was impregnated that his resolutions to do what his better nature told him was right had not even a fighting chance against the opposing forces. She realized now that his three days' absence from the farm, the melancholy scenes in which he had taken part, and the daily contact with the priest, had combined to drive him further from her and make him cling closer to the belief that it was the voice of *conscience* he heard.

She summoned all her courage to her aid and determined to have it out with him. Without altering her position, and with Felix still at her side, she addressed him.

"John, are you going to let me be to you what I was three weeks ago?"

Felix' eyes never left his father's face.

"What was that?" demanded the sullen man.

"A wife."

"They say you're not."

She had been ready for that blow and stood it without a flinch. Her face changed color, a flush of indignation mounting her cheeks. The arm about her boy's neck drew him closer, her eyes shot forth a fire he had not seen there before.

"I am your wife and this is your son. God joined you and me together thirteen years ago, and no man's hand can put us asunder."

"I think I sinned against the Church—that's what they say."

"Oh, John, how can you be so weak? You may have broken a law of your Church, but you did not sin. The Roman Catholic Church is not God."

She said this with so much power, her whole person aflame with the light of truth, he turned his eyes from her. She felt the boy at her side tremble, and pressed him tightly to her. Throughout, Felix had not taken his eyes from his father's face, and she asked herself if it were wise to have him witness such a scene. In her heart she feared a tempest of wrath.

The man looked at her again and mumbled something about God's punishment of sinners, the Church and—

Her indignation died away, and she now spoke in a quiet voice.

"John, I will say no more. If you prefer the Church I will not stand in your way. I still love you."

She was trembling, and felt the arm of the boy pass about her waist. Its affectionate pressure strengthened her.

She put out a hand.

"John, are you going?"

"I guess so."

Felix sprang from his mother's side, his face in a flame of rage, his eyes flashing angrily, his fists clenched. Planting himself firmly in front of his father he shouted:

"You're a coward. You're frightened of the Church. The priest is a liar. You don't love mother."

The boy's reward for this display of courage was a stinging slap on the face that sent him reeling against the table. What would have happened next had his mother not stepped forward and laid a detaining hand upon him, it is hard to say.

"Felix, stop! He is your father," said Barbara, now so nervous she could scarcely stand.

The boy's anger fled, and he said quietly, "I could love him if he was a brave man, mother."

The two stood facing him again. Turning suddenly from them he looked out of the door. A gust of wind chilled the room. It had ceased snowing, and the moon bathed the country in her soft silver light. He put on his coat and cap and went out to the stable. They ran to the window and watched him bring out the driver and hitch it to a single cutter. As he passed the side of the house they ran to the door and called to him. It was too late.

The door closed again, and Barbara and Felix faced each other. Both guessed the terrible truth, yet tried to thrust it from them. Barbara, dazed almost into insensibility, dropped into a chair and buried her face in her hands. Felix locked the door for the night, then went over to his mother. Placing an arm about her neck, he said, "Try to keep up, mother, dear. I will take care of you."

CHAPTER XXV.

"IT'S THE WORK OF THE DEVIL."

"Thus Satan, talking to his nearest mate,
With head up-lift above the wave, and eyes
That sparkling blazed, his other parts besides
Prone on the flood, extending long and large,
Lay floating many a rood. . . .
Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool
His mighty stature; on each hand the flames,
Driven backward slope their pointed spires, and roll'd
In billows, leave i' the mist a horrid vale."

—Milton.

BEING a wise boy Felix allowed his mother's tears to flow without entering protest, and did nothing more than let her feel his presence. He knew her thoroughly, much more thoroughly than she knew him, and waited patiently at her side until the violence of her weeping should have passed away. He felt no regret for having attacked his father; in fact, he seemed to feel that he had erred on the side of leniency, and told himself that the desertion might have been prevented had he been older, for then it would have been a hand-to-hand battle. Deep down in his boyish heart he believed that all his father needed to bring him to a proper frame of mind was a sound thrashing. He had seen corporal punishment work miracles in the schoolroom.

The boy did not concern himself with his father's moral philosophy—if he had any; he saw only the plain and, to his mind brutal, act of desertion. The idea flashed through his mind that perhaps grief had made his father mad, and for a moment he felt sorry; but when he recalled the fact that the man who had gone away had been unlike himself since the day the decree was read, he dismissed the idea of insanity, and looked about for someone to blame. His mother had told him of the decree, and had explained it in plainer and honester words than those used by the priest. He realized, therefore, that this law of his father's Church was the fundamental cause of the trouble. On the other hand, he did not believe that if left to himself to interpret the decree his father would have seen in it any reason for going off. He reasoned, therefore, that a mind cleverer than that possessed by John Terrance had prompted the cruel act, and the only conclusion he could arrive at now was that the priest was the unseen power.

This much decided, Felix Terrance declared himself to be in a state of war with Father McCarthy. There his young, untrained mind stopped.

Raising her face to the boy at her side Barbara told him she felt better, and would try not to give way to tears; they must stand by each other.

"He may return, Felix," she said, brightening at the thought of seeing him walk in and take his accustomed place of honor in the home.

"If he stays away we'll tell the police at Marysville, mother."

"Don't talk like that, Felix. Mr. Reid told me the law would pursue a man who deserted his wife, but I shall not complain to the police."

Barbara's refined nature recoiled from the thought of vulgar publicity; as far as possible they would keep this thing a secret.

"We must wait, Felix; wait and watch."

She sought to convince herself that a mad thought had possession of him; that it had been nourished by the priest and the widow; and that after a brief season away from that influence he would come to his senses, fling the wicked thing from him, and return to her as the John Terrance of a month ago.

"It doesn't seem reasonable that he should stay away long, Felix," she said at length.

Truth to tell, she had not yet realized that he had gone. Had she had a clear vision of what his words meant she would have flung herself upon his neck and begged of him to think again before taking so terrible a step. But the brief scene preliminary to his departure had been so strange it had seemed unreal.

Fixing his steady, fearless eyes upon her, Felix said, "Mother, I think Father McCarthy is to blame. We should do something with him."

The thought of some sort of chastisement possessed the boy's mind, but goodness only knows what he contemplated doing to the priest. He may have had

a mental picture of the old gentleman fleeing across the country, his coat-tails flying in the air, jumping ditch and fence with an agility worthy of a man thirty years his junior, and Felix Terrance not far behind. Or he may have thought of taking a riding-whip and hiding behind the schoolhouse pump until the old gentleman should come to instruct the Catholic pupils and then suddenly pouncing out and breaking the whip over his back, very much after the fashion the hero does it in story books.

"We must blame no one yet, Felix. Let us go to bed now, and sometime to-morrow he will very likely come back to us."

She took him in her arms and pressed him to her bosom, kissing him many times. Had the man who was then tearing through the snow been brought back to look upon that picture the story of "The Lad Felix" might have ended with this chapter—at least, we will think that much good of him. But he did not return that night, and with the unclasping of their arms and the good-night kiss that picture passed away.

Let the doors of Hillcrest Farm be locked for the night; let the light in the kitchen be put out; let a special lamp be lit and put on a window-ledge that its rays might be seen from the Marysville road; let it be trimmed and kept burning every night, for verily no man knoweth what a night may bring forth, what joy cometh in the morning; let the lad Felix kneel at his bed each night and ask God to give

his mother strength to fight the daily battle; let Barbara ask for "his return."

Each day brought its "trivial round and common task." Felix could not attend school. Fortunately the time was the end of February, when there was little more to do than attend the live stock, but this work made it impossible for the boy to devote much time to lessons. He was to write his entrance examination in June, and every day from school meant a reduction in his chances of success. But his deep concern for his mother made him forget himself, and he felt glad to be near her every hour of the day.

Barbara did not allow herself to lose hope. Every day without him she regarded as a day nearer his return. Neighbors had called and asked for John, and were told quietly that he had gone away for a few days.

This harmless deception worked successfully for a time, and enquirers invariably said they supposed a change would do him good. Barbara faced them all in her usual calm manner, and even went so far as to make some pretence at joining in the laughter a mirthful remark would provoke. When alone she fought down the fears that loomed in her mind and maintained a brave front.

But Felix saw through the veneer. His searching eyes, trained into seeing beneath the surface of his mother's attitude, told him she was losing confidence in the hopes with which she buoyed herself, and that before long she must collapse under the

strain and admit defeat. On the Sunday following his father's departure he had entered her room somewhat suddenly and found his mother in tears. She seemed distressed that he should find her thus, and hastened to tell him it was nothing, that a foolish idea had come into her head. It was now gone.

Two days later her brother, Jim King, called at the farm. As he had come to see John he went first to the barn. There he found Felix sharpening a handsaw, his head bent low over his task.

"Hailo, Felix, old boy! In disgrace? Has your father given you this job as punishment?" cried Jim, in his hearty style.

The face the boy turned up to him was not the face of the Felix he had known and loved. It looked old and his cheeks were wet.

"Well, well, well; and crying, too, and looking generally miserable. Why, what's the matter, lad?"

"He's gone."

"He's gone? Who's gone?"

"Father."

The boy could say no more, and burst into tears. Jim, entirely in the dark as to what his little nephew meant, played the part of big brother. He got the boy on his feet, put his arm about his neck, and rubbed a rough hand affectionately over his curly head. His sympathy had a good effect upon the weeping boy, and in a few minutes he was hearing all about it.

"I know he won't come back, because he's afraid of the priest," said Felix during the telling.

"But what ever is your mother doing about it?" asked his uncle.

"She's just worrying. She pretends she's not, and tells me every day she believes he'll come back. I don't believe he will. He's a coward," said Felix.

"Did the priest come to the house, ever, went on Jim.

"No. He used to see him in Marysville. Mother says that just before grandma died she told father he was sinning because he wasn't married by a priest. That scared him."

"How long has he been thinking about it?"

"Since that Sunday the decree was read in church."

"And do you mean to say he told your mother he was going and that he has really left his home because of what a priest said?" asked Jim, his temper rising.

"He's gone, all right," answered the unhappy boy. He had never seen Uncle Jim in anything but a good temper, but he now looked upon a giant with the anger of an outraged god upon his face.

"Then, by God, Felix, lad, he's a damned scoundrel!"

Before Felix could agree with his uncle—and he could have done so heartily—Jim was out of the barn and into the house, where he found Barbara trimming the special lamp and filling it with oil. As he entered the kitchen she looked up as though startled, and he saw that her eyes were red.

"Hallo, Jim," she said, feigning brightness.

Pulling off his fur cap, he strode over to his sister and laid a hand on her shoulder.

"Barbara," he began, in a strange voice, "what's this that has happened?"

She did not think of his having seen Felix, and tried to speak lightly.

"What do you mean, Jim?"

"I mean about his going off. Is it true, Barbara?"

Down tumbled her bulwarks, crumbling into dust before his steady gaze, and tears followed them. He took her in his arms and held her there until the storm of weeping had spent itself. Then she told him all. When she reached the end she took hold of his big, strong hands and, looking into his weather-worn face, told him that she was not worrying "very much."

"I think he will come back, Jim," she said.

The day after his leaving the word had been "know"; a week later it was changed to "believe"; now it was "think."

Jim kissed his sister and returned to the barn, where he found Felix sitting in a corner with a very white face. He spoke kindly to him.

"Now, look here, Felix, old boy; we've got to see this thing through. You've got to be a man and stand by your mother, whatever happens. I'll stand by you both if it costs me every cent and every ounce of strength I have. This is the ugliest thing that ever happened on earth. No man made in God's image ever fixed up a plan that would separate your

mother from her husband after thirteen years of happy married life. It's the work of the devil. I believe that between them the priest and your grandmother played on his feelings until he heard everything but the voice of conscience. Now he's going about somewhere believing that in breaking your mother's heart he's saving his miserable soul from a lot of fantastical tortures that God never inflicted on man and that live only in the minds of people brought up in fear instead of love."

"I knew he was a coward," said Felix, secretly admiring his uncle, and glad to hear this powerful endorsement of his own opinions.

"Now, lad," concluded Jim, preparing to leave the barn, "I'll be over here every day. We'll have to decide on a plan for working the farm—get a hired man, I guess; and you, my little man, will have to give up school and be a farmer. Let's be brave about it, and manly, and perhaps between us we'll be able to patch things up. Give me your hand, my boy."

The light of childhood left the boy's face as the meaning of his uncle's words seared his young heart. But there was an expression on Jim's countenance that reminded him of his mother, and he grasped the hand with all his might.

"I'll do the best I can, Uncle Jim," was all he said.

During the remainder of the day Barbara and the boy made no reference to Jim's visit. In the evening

Felix took out his lesson books and, while his mother did some mending, applied himself to study. He handled the books with less pleasure than before. His ambition to become a doctor had received its death blow, and he now saw nothing but farm life before him. However, he told himself that if farm work meant comfort for his mother, then to him it would be the happiest of all work. He looked up from his books occasionally to steal a glance at her face, and always found her looking at him. When this happened neither would speak, and their eyes returned to their work.

It was nearly nine o'clock, and Felix was packing up his books when a peculiar noise was heard by them both.

"What was that, Felix?" asked his mother, in slight alarm.

"I don't know, mother. It sounds like something hitting the window."

He made a tour of the house downstairs, but could discover nothing.

"There it is again," said Barbara, nervously.

"I'll look out. It's at the front," said the boy.

"Here I've been tappin' this side window with my whip for fully two minutes. I didn't want to get out," said Mr. Tawkesbury, as Felix opened the door.

"Here's a letter for your mother. The mail was late coming in to-night. I saw it was from the States, and thought it would be from your Uncle Fred. I was coming this way, so I brought it along with me. Good-night."

It was a clear, cold night, and old Gabriel had wrapped his feet up so tightly and strapped the buffalo robes around his legs so snugly that it would have taken fifteen minutes to get out.

"Letter from Uncle Fred, mother," cried Felix, and they both looked glad. Barbara took the missive eagerly and looked at the address, then at the postmark, then at the back of the envelope, then at the front again, her face changing color, her hands trembling. Felix, anxious to know what Uncle Fred had to say—it was usually something very jolly—watched his mother impatiently.

"It's not from Uncle Fred," she said at last. The boy's heart gave a jump, and he became infected with his mother's nervousness.

She opened it and read:

"Don't expect me back. Everything is fixed at the bank for you. I'll earn enough to keep me. I went to the priest when I got here, and he said it was all right if my conscience told me I was not doing right in living with you, not being married by a priest. Good-bye. Good-bye to Felix. JOHN."

This masterpiece of cruelty, designed in the name of morality by a man utterly indifferent to the sufferings of a good woman and a pure-hearted boy, and executed for the sole purpose of saving its author's soul, did its work most efficiently. After clubbing its victim into insensibility it tore the flesh of the boy's heart, so that the wound was never healed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BARBARA CONFRONTS THE PRIEST.

IN fulfilment of his promise Uncle Jim came over to Hillcrest Farm next day. He saw the boy first, and learned from him that his father had decided to stay away—that he had bidden wife and son good-bye. This act of sublime thoughtfulness so impressed the big-hearted Jim, he immediately swore a mighty oath that if ever his brother-in-law came within arm's length of him he would knock his head off. Strange to say, this prophecy of decapitation, instead of causing Felix to shudder, produced an opposite effect, and the expression on his face seemed to indicate that if Uncle Jim wished to do him a great favor he would invite him to the performance at which his father's head was to be removed. When Jim had cooled off he and the boy began to plan for the future.

"I'll hire a good man right away, and we'll keep the farm in full swing, Felix. You must work hard and keep a keen eye on everything."

"Especially the priest, if he ever comes around," said Felix, determinedly.

"He won't trouble you. His work is done," asserted Jim.

Barbara was so shaken by the contents of the letter

she could scarcely move about the house that day. Jim betrayed no anger before his sister, but did everything he could to strengthen her while he was at the farm. He told her of the plans he and Felix had agreed upon, and spoke hopefully of the future. In two or three years' time Felix would be able to manage the farm without his overseership, but, until that time, they must regard him (Jim) as their protector, guide, counsellor and friend.

"Hannah feels very bad about it, Barbara, and is coming to see you to-morrow. Now try to get back your strength, and let them see the good stuff Jim King's sister is made of."

With these parting words he went away.

The day dragged on, and nightfall found them sitting much the same as they had sat the night before, Felix at his books, Barbara sewing. The kitchen clock struck nine.

"Bedtime, Felix, dear," said his mother, and five minutes later she was alone. She began to think of the line of action she should take. The letter, if it were true, meant that her husband had gone for ever, that she was to all intents and purposes a widow; nay, she was worse than that, she told her —a discarded wife; nay, even worse than that in his eyes—a woman who had lived thirteen years in sin. There was a name for such a woman, but it did not come to her pure mind at once. What was there was bad enough. According to his line of reasoning by deserting his wife and son he found favor in the sight of God; but she and the boy, what of them?

Was God's face turned away? Were they on a lower plane? Had his craven fear of eternal punishment put his feet on a moral and spiritual eminence from which he might look down with pitying eye upon them? Had his deliberate violation of the country's law taken him a step nearer paradise? Had his heartless breaking of the vows he made before a clergyman of the Church of England drawn him nearer to the Master who had said that a man shall forsake all, even his father and mother, and cleave only to his wife?

"I'll go to the priest, and have it out with him to-night," said Barbara to herself.

Felix had been in bed more than an hour, and she judged he would be asleep. Dressing hurriedly, she lit the stable lantern and stood it on the kitchen table. From a drawer in the sideboard she took a pair of John's driving gloves. Then she crept upstairs. Felix was sound asleep. He lay on his side, one hand under his cheek, the other on the quilt. Bending over the bed she kissed his hair, fearful lest she should wake him. Once downstairs again she took the lantern and, locking the door from the outside, passed over to the stable. John had taken the driver when he left, but the old mare was there. She had the greatest difficulty in hitching up, but succeeded at last. The night was fine, no snow had fallen for several days, and there was every prospect of an early spring. As she drove through the gate and turned towards Marysville, she looked up and saw the light burning on the window-ledge.

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The drive was cheerless. She passed two or three cutters, and received a good-night from each. She had hoped that by burying herself in the robes and fastening a woolen shawl tightly about her head she would escape recognition, but a voice from one of the passing cutters had used her name. Marysville had not gone to sleep when she reached Main Street. Several houses had their windows lit up, and the hotel looked as bright as usual. At the priest's house she saw one window illumined by a light. John had once told her it was the study window. Fastening her horse to a telegraph pole a little past the priest's gate, she hurried to the door and rang the bell. After waiting a long time it was slowly opened by the old housekeeper.

"I wish to see Father McCarthy," said Barbara.

The woman did not speak, but threw the door wide open so that the visitor might enter.

The priest, hearing an unfamiliar voice in the hall, put his head out of the door.

"Who is that?" he asked.

"A woman, Father," was the housekeeper's reply.

"Someone ill?"

"Doesn't look it, Father."

"What name?"

Before the housekeeper could answer, Barbara had stepped forward.

"The wife of John Terrance," she said, in clear, decisive tones.

The priest betrayed surprise, but opened the door. Then he closed and locked it.

"Will you be seated, please?" he asked, in a soft voice.

"No, thank you. I did not come to stay. I will stand," replied Barbara.

Her beautiful face had lost its color, but not its calm. Her figure was erect, almost commanding, and she looked upon the priest with fearless eyes. How the meeting should end she did not now care.

The room was the priest's study. A picture of the crucified Christ hung over the open fireplace, and the Father's reading-lamp threw subdued light upon a table which stood before his bookcase.

"Why have you come to see me?" asked the priest, fixing his searching eyes upon the unhappy wife.

"My husband has deserted me," said Barbara.

"Is that the right word to use? I understand he has left ample provision for you."

"A wife does not love for fields and barns."

"Women have given themselves for less."

"I did not sell myself on my wedding day. I gave him all my love; he gave me his."

"Is that what you came to say to me?"

"No. Did you tell him to leave me?"

"I did not."

"Did you encourage him to believe that if he remained with me he would be sinning against God—the Church?"

The priest shook his head, but gave no answer.

"Does the decree say that a marriage such as ours, taking place thirteen years ago, was not proper; that

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I am a wicked woman; that my son is not like other children?"

"It does not say so."

"But is that what it means?"

"The decree says that such marriages taking place after 1908 will not be recognized by the Church."

The words put a glimmer of hope into the aching heart of Barbara. She sought to fan it into a flame.

"Then the Roman Church acknowledges our marriage?" she asked, eagerly.

"She leaves the question involved for the individual conscience to settle."

"Oh, Father McCarthy, tell me, tell me, did you cause my husband to think that he should have received the Sacrament of Matrimony?"

"He appeared to be of that mind."

"Then you did not drive him away?"

"How could you think so?"

"He believes he pleases you in going."

"I would be the last in the world to tell him so."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, Father McCarthy. You are so good, so kind. I am sorry I thought ill of you."

This outburst of gratitude almost overwhelmed the priest, and fearing that Barbara might touch him he thrust forth a restraining hand.

"Calm yourself, calm yourself, Mrs. Terrance. This is neither time nor place for scenes."

Barbara quickly recovered her composure and returned to her task.

"I am sure now that he was mistaken about it all. Will you bring him back to me?"

"How can I do that? I did not send him away."

"But if you sent him word that he was wrong, that the decree does not make our marriage unholy, he would return, I know, I know. Do send for him. We are so lonely without him. The nights are so long, the days so dark, the house so cold. Tell him I love him, I love him, I love him."

"But is he wrong?"

"He believes that if he does not obey his conscience he will receive terrible punishment after death."

"So he will."

"But you say he has not sinned against God."

"You are mistaken. I did not say so."

"He has not sinned, has he?"

"You and I cannot judge."

Suddenly falling upon her knees, the shawl which had sheltered her head from the cold night air thrown back, her hands clasped in supplication, Barbara humbled herself before the priest.

"Oh, give me back my husband, give him back to me, give him back," she implored.

The priest turned away, as though the sight of her beautiful face was too much for him, and stood thus until her hands touched him.

He then addressed her sternly:

"Woman, I cannot give you back the man you call husband. His conscience drove him away."

"No, no, no, not his conscience. The conscience

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is a man's better self. John loved me, he loved Felix—he would not wilfully injure us. You have frightened him—terrified him into forgetting the vows he made at the altar.”

“What altar?”

“A clergyman of the Church of England made us man and wife, and Rome cannot, dare not, separate us.”

“I acknowledge no altar save that of the Holy Roman Church—no priesthood but that to which I belong. John Terrance made his vows before neither priest nor altar.”

“Then you say I am not married?”

“John Terrance was a Catholic. A Catholic to be legally married must be married by a Catholic priest.”

Barbara's eyes flashed fire at the priest. It had begun to dawn upon her tortured mind that the man before her had enveloped himself in a cloak of spiritual superiority and was now regarding her as an unholy thing, a concubine, a mistress, a woman of the street. He despised her—she could read that in his face—should she spring upon him and with what physical strength she had gratify the angry spirit within her.

No. He was an old man.

“You are cruel, cruel, cruel,” she cried piteously.

“The law of the land sanctioned our marriage—you have no right to separate us.”

“I am no vulgar law-breaker,” he answered coldly.

“Then tell him to come back to me.”

"That you might both receive the Sacrament of Matrimony?"

"No, I do not mean that,—that would be for me to admit that for thirteen years I have been living in sin."

"The Church offers this as a solution."

"It is an insult. I was baptized into the Church of England; when I was fourteen years old I received the rite of confirmation; a clergyman of my Church performed the ceremony of matrimony, and you ask me to turn my back upon it, to say that it is a church in name only, that its ministers are actors in a religious farce. I shall never, never do it."

The priest frowned upon the kneeling figure of Barbara and flung open the door.

"It is unnecessary to prolong this scene," he said sternly.

Barbara fled from the house.

Sick at heart, her spirit crushed, her nerves broken, her last hope wrecked upon the rocks of the Church of Rome, Barbara turned her horse's head towards "home." Blinded by tears, she knew not where she was driving. The night was dark. She trusted to her horse. For fifteen minutes the cutter kept to the road, then suddenly swerved and crashed into a telegraph pole.

Flung into the ditch, Barbara felt excruciating pain for an instant, then a numbness crept over her body. She felt herself being spun round and round, as if in a whirlpool, the velocity increasing every moment, then down, down, down into the dark.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FELIX SEARCHES FOR BARBARA.

WHEN Felix awoke next morning the sun was shining upon his bed, sparrows chirruped in the eave-trough above his window, and he could hear a steady drip, drip, of melting snow upon the window-ledge. He did not rise immediately, but stretched himself, and thought over all that had happened during the past two weeks. Collectively the events were indistinct; indeed, when viewed separately each one presented so many difficulties he failed to fully grasp its meaning. The effect they had produced was quite clear to his young mind, and he determined to put away all thoughts of becoming a doctor. Taking a metaphorical rubber he courageously erased from his slate the second of the two sentences he had first learned to write, "I don't want to be a farmer," and in its place he wrote, "I want to be a farmer so that I can work for mother." The first of the original sentences, "I love mamma," would stand for all time.

He recalled Uncle Jim's words, and felt strong enough to go into a lion's den. He saw himself working from sunrise to nightfall and laying the

fruits of his labor at his mother's feet. In his eyes that privilege seemed a splendid reward.

After dressing, he knelt down, as he had always been taught to do, and asked for strength and guidance. The prayer was one his mother had chosen:

"Heavenly Father, I thank Thee for Thy watchful care through another night; I bless Thee because Thou hast given me rest and enabled me to begin the duties of another day; help me, I beseech Thee, rightly to fulfil those duties. Grant that I may do whatsoever I can to serve Thee; give me strength in temptation, that I fall not into any sin; help me to be loving and kind to those around me; bless my mother and father, and help us all this day to keep from grieving Thee; for Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*"

When he reached the name "father" he stopped for a moment, turned the matter over in his mind, then tackled the clause again. This time it ran: "Bless my mother, and help us all this day to keep from grieving Thee."

Being just a plain-minded boy, nearing thirteen years of age, he did not ponder the question of whether it was right to omit that name, and in the next breath ask to be kept from grieving God. He did his own thinking about his "father."

Since the departure he had gone each morning into his mother's room, ere going downstairs. He always knocked and received word to enter. This morning there was no answer, and he knocked again. Surely his mother must be sleeping soundly. Again

he knocked ; then looked into the bedroom. The bed, snowy and inviting, had not been slept on. The room was in perfect order. On the window-ledge the lamp was burning, its light contrasting strangely with the brightness of the sun. He walked around the room, looking at everything, as if expecting to see his mother come suddenly from behind a piece of furniture and say, "Hallo, Felix." Standing in the middle of the room, he called her by name. Three times did he do this, his voice louder at each call. Finally he concluded that she had very likely risen earlier than usual and tidied her room before leaving.

Downstairs he went with a bound. The kitchen was still, the blinds down, the lamp out, the stove as cold as ice. This was the first time the fire had gone out over night ; clearly it had not been damped down as usual.

"Mother ! Mother !" he called aloud.

Felix tried the door. It was locked. The key was gone. Running into the parlor he looked vainly around. Her picture was there, the face looking sweeter, more restful than ever. He thought he saw the lips move.

"Mother !"

"Mamma !"

"Mamma, dear, where are you ?"

His voice answered itself and he began to tremble ; at what, he did not know. Hurrying to the front door, he unlocked it and looked out.

All he could see was the white fields and dark

fences and a wagon loaded with milk cans going down the road. Running around the side of the house he scanned the fields and the barnyard. The hens were the only living things in sight.

Entering the barn he called with all his might, "Mother! Mother! Mother!"

The steel chains on the cattle in the adjoining byre slid back and forth in their rings, and a horse kicked a partition. All else was silent, and while he stood wondering a rooster crowed. Going upstairs into the mow he threw open the doors, and from that elevation scanned the landscape. There was nothing to help him there. Passing into the stable he found the old mare's stall empty and her harness gone from the wall. The small cutter was not to be seen. He knew then that his mother had driven away; but when?

Why had she not left word?

Had she gone at night?

If so, why had she not returned?

Felix went back into the house, the cold, cheerless house. His heart grew sick. Something told him all was not well, and he sat down on the edge of the parlor sofa, opposite her face, his legs stretched out, a hand resting on the seat at each side of him. Perhaps, he thought, she might move those lips again and tell him where she was. More likely he felt comforted by merely looking into those beautiful eyes. Troubles had vanished before when he did that; why not now?

Someone else had gone into that parlor when his mind was perplexed and had derived strength from the same face; but the boy did not know that.

While sitting thus the boy's eye rested upon an envelope which lay on the family Bible. Thinking it might be a message from his mother, he picked it up. One glance told him it was the letter that had stunned her two nights ago. Its touch stung his fingers, and he dropped it on the floor.

An angry spirit seized him, and he ground the paper beneath his heel, his teeth set, a frown darkening his face.

Flinging himself face downwards upon the sofa he burst into tears. Oh, how dark and cruel and perplexing everything appeared just then. Where was his mother? Why had she been away from home all night? That was not like an act of hers; something very serious must have happened.

While the boy was held in the grip of this paroxysm of grief a key was inserted into the kitchen door, from the outside, and someone entered. He did not hear, so violent was his weeping. A moment later a hand was laid upon his head, crushing the curls.

"Felix."

On hearing the voice he knew so well, Felix looked up and saw Mr. Lloyd looking at him.

Jumping to his feet he said, "Where's mother?"

The curate laid a hand upon the boy's shoulder and said, in a voice filled with sympathy, "Your

mother met with an accident last night, and is at Marysville. She lives, thank God."

When Jim King arrived that morning he went first to the house. He found the door locked and a note pinned there. It ran:

"Dear Mr. King,—Mrs. Terrance met with a rather serious accident while driving on the Marysville road last night, and is lying at Miss Jones' Private Hospital. Felix and I are driving over now. Come as soon as you can. DAVID LLOYD."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FELIX VISITS HIS MOTHER.

TIMOTHY SEEDE and his wife, who had been visiting in Marysville, found Barbara huddled up in the snow. She had lain there half an hour, and was still unconscious. The old mare was standing near, still shaking from fright. They lifted the injured woman into their cutter with the greatest tenderness, and drove back to Marysville.

The Misses Jones' Private Hospital was unpretentious, a small dwelling having been transformed into a nursing institution. The elder of the two sisters, Nurse Margaret, had just sent her sister, Nurse Edith, to bed, and was settling down to read when the cutter arrived. Dr. McCutcheon was sent for and pronounced the case to be serious.

"Left leg broken, left arm dislocated, head whole, internal injuries; may live, may die."

With the morning light came a return to consciousness, and Barbara asked for Felix.

Felix uttered never a word during that drive, and the morning air failed to paint his cheeks. Anxious to take the boy's mind from the trouble that had come upon him, Mr. Lloyd told him an Old Testa-

ment story, considerably abstaining from torturing him with an "application."

Nurse Margaret met them at the door, and for a moment divided her attention between the curate's face and the boy's hair. Mr. Lloyd tried to recall where he had seen a face like hers before, but concluded that he must have been mistaken; there could not be a face exactly like that anywhere else.

Nurse Margaret told Felix that he could remain with his mother not longer than five minutes, unless the doctor said otherwise, and conducted him into the room where Barbara lay. Anticipating a sudden dash forward, she wisely held his arm. The curate remained in another room.

"You must speak quietly, and not say anything to excite your mother," she whispered.

Barbara was unable to move. The pain was great, but she forgot it when her eyes rested upon her boy, and she smiled as of old.

Felix breathed her name, and their lips met, his tears wetting her white face. When he raised his head she spoke.

"Jim will look after you, dear. I saw the priest, then—"

Barbara closed her eyes as if to shut out the rest, then lapsed into unconsciousness.

Felix, unable to restrain his grief, burst into tears and was led from the room.

Jim King came in half an hour later and was permitted to see his sister for a moment only. He and

Mr. Lloyd talked things over, and it was decided that Felix should be kept in Marysville while his mother's life hung in the balance.

"You shall be my visitor for a few days, Felix," said the curate, taking the boy's arm.

Nurse Margaret came in as he said this, and secretly admired the picture.

"Miss Jones, Felix will stay at the Rectory until his mother is out of danger. Mr. Reid is in Toronto, and I know what Mrs. Reid's feelings will be in the matter," he said.

People with inquisitive eyes might have seen a very delicate blush pass over Nurse Margaret's face, but as there were no such people present just then we doubt whether we have any right to record that change of color.

"Perhaps you would like to talk for a few minutes. Come, Felix, and see my butterflies," said Nurse Margaret.

The curate wondered how it was that Miss Jones had thought of that when he was thinking of the same thing; and altogether likely Jim was longing for just such an opportunity.

"Mr. Lloyd, Hillcrest Farm has been wrecked," began Jim, with characteristic bluntness.

Unable to interpret the words, the curate merely raised his eyebrows enquiringly. Jim went on:

"That *Ne Temere* decree got hold of Terrance, and twisted him from a man into a heartless wife and child deserter. After it was read he began to worry.

His mother and the priest helped him. He got so tangled he went about the house like a surly madman. Then the widow fell sick, and I understand she terrified the life out of him in her dying breath. A scene between him and the priest in the room where the body lay finished him. He told them his conscience bothered him, that he believed he was not married in the sight of God. Then he went off. A couple of days ago he wrote from Chicago saying he had gone for good. Barbara's heart nearly broke. Felix whispered just now that she had been to see the priest. Now there's this."

The curate's face was lined with pain.

"And such a splendid woman," he said, when the brother ceased speaking.

"She loves him still," went on Jim.

"Christlike character," said the listener, as though talking to himself.

"I can safely say that Felix doesn't."

"Extraordinary boy; very tempestuous."

"I believe if he had been bigger he would have knocked the man down. I know I would."

"Very human."

"I tell you what, Mr. Lloyd, if I ever meet him it will be one or other of us on top. Do you believe that it was his conscience that drove him from the woman he had sworn to love and cherish?"

"I do not. A deceitful heart is nearer the cause."

"What do you think of the priest?"

"I must not judge him. During the short time I have known Father McCarthy I have learned to

respect him. I can hardly think he told your brother-in-law to desert his wife. He is too discreet."

"But he didn't raise his hand to stop him."

"I suppose he left it with the man's conscience."

"You are altogether too generous, Mr. Lloyd. That decree was intended to do this sort of work; and no matter how naturally kind the priest might be he wouldn't dare to say a word to stop it. I guess Terrance figured it out that if a marriage like his was sinful after a certain date it must have been sinful before it. Sin is sin all the time."

"But is it sin? Was it ever sin? I don't think so."

"It might have been sin against the Church, but not against God; and he's so scared of what the Church tells him will happen to those who break her laws, he plays the cad, breaks his wife's heart, kills the love his boy had for him, and smashes up a home that was the happiest in the district."

"Mr. Lloyd, if I believed that the voice of God had made him do that, I'd never utter another prayer."

Impressed by the earnestness of the speaker the curate rose.

"Mr. King—Jim—let us pray that the wretched man may be led to distinguish between a deceitful heart and the still, small voice."

"And His, that gentle voice we hear,
Soft as the breath of even;
That checks each fault, that calms each fear,
And speaks of heaven."

As the curate finished the verse Nurse Margaret and Felix returned. The doctor had been, and had spoken hopefully of Barbara's condition. Jim was permitted to see his sister before he left. She had recovered consciousness, and smiled as he approached the bed.

He leaned over to kiss her, and heard a faint voice.

"Jim, don't encourage Felix to think evil of his father. Promise."

There was so much entreaty in her voice, he could not do otherwise than promise.

As he tiptoed from the room, he felt that that was the hardest thing he had ever undertaken to do.

Dear old Jim had just been thinking how he and that young sympathetic spirit would concoct plots together. Now he must hold his peace. At all events, Barbara had not asked him to change his opinions, or to preach forgiveness to Felix, so they could continue to think as they liked.

Leaving the hospital together the trio parted, Jim to drive to Hillcrest Farm and attend the stock, Mr. Lloyd and Felix to go to the rectory. Mrs. Reid heard the story from the curate and cried, of course. Then she took Felix into her arms and showed him that, although she had no family of her own, she could hug a boy of thirteen "just like his mother." Felix spent the rest of the morning in the rector's peaceful old study, and there found friends he learned to love in later years.

"You know, Felix," said the curate, looking up

from one of Kingsley's sermons, which were always inspiration to him, "God has a marvellous way of doing things, and when we see our plans upset, the papers sent flying in all directions, and the castles we had begun to build tumbling down and making us feel sick at heart, and sometimes angry, from all the confusion and ruin there will arise some great lesson that will teach us that we have been all wrong in our plans, and that is why the wind came and blew them all away, and why the half-built castle collapsed."

"Was our home that sort of building, Mr. Lloyd?" the boy asked.

"No, I don't think so," confessed the curate, in strange tones.

"Hasn't it all gone, now?" persisted Felix.

"Let us hope not," was the earnest reply.

"I think it has, and he's to blame," said Felix, with a frown.

"Felix," went on the curate, "I don't want you to be too stern with your father. There is something we don't understand about it all. God may send him back to you. I do not defend your father, but we must be sure before we judge."

"I am sure," said the boy.

CHAPTER XXIX.

JOHN ATTENDS A THEATRE.

OUR readers must not imagine that the man who deserted his wife and son at the dictation of what he believed to be *conscience*, experienced undiluted satisfaction in his act.

Drawing five hundred dollars out of the bank, he quickly shook the snow of Canada from his boots, and passed into the United States. This he did because he knew that the law of Canada was quite candid about the matter, and called him a wife deserter. His religious scruples might bestow a finer name upon him, but the law of his country called a spade a spade. His first thought, therefore, as might be expected, was to put his precious body beyond the reach of a policeman's hand, just as he imagined that by wrecking his home he was saving his soul from eternal punishment. But instead of feeling contentment in what he had done, he quickly became a man "seeking rest and finding none."

John Terrance was a simple farmer, knowing no other life than that provided by the fields, and his ignorance of the pitfalls prepared for men of his stamp quickly brought disaster. His plans were immature when he left home, and continued so until

the last of the five hundred dollars had gone. His mind was unsettled from the first, and he found it impossible to decide upon any definite course. So he became as a straw before the wind—a straw with five hundred dollars in its pocket. He found himself in Chicago, and the "sights" entertained him for a full week. Taking a room in a small hotel he devoted his waking hours to seeing the things enumerated in a guide book, and found in them enough interest to steer his mind clear of a place called Hillcrest Farm. He had read about the wonders he now looked upon, and marvelled at the difference between an object described by a writer and the thing itself. Had he known more about the mission of fiction he might never have believed the piece of prime deceit that had taken him out of Chippendale. But, as we have said, he was a simple farmer, as the two gentlemen who met him at the end of his sixth day in the Windy City could have told you. He met them each evening on returning to his hotel, and they interested his untutored mind in a plan for making money. The initial investment was to be three hundred dollars. At the end of two weeks John was to find at least five hundred dollars lying to his credit at the National Bank. The investment was to be made in real estate, John Terrance, farmer, becoming the owner of an acre of land in a part of the city where values were going up five dollars a foot per diem. He need feel no anxiety; his newly-found friends would do the business for him. All he had to do

was to sit in the rotunda of the hotel and puff cigars. Bulletins telling him of the sudden jumps in values would be brought in each evening. As he became rich he could lay out his capital in any direction pleasing to himself.

An automobile drive and an hour spent in viewing a parcel of "land" which might very well have been called "Frog Town," sufficed to convince John Terrance that his reward for obeying "conscience" was coming quicker than he expected; and away went three hundred dollars.

Two days later he asked the hotel clerk where the two gentlemen were. The clerk could not say; they had paid their bills and departed. John explained his interest in them, and when his tale was told the gentleman behind the register called him to one side and whispered in his ear:

"A skin game, sonny. You've been buncoed out of your chips. Those wise guys are in Noo York now, I guess. Cheer up. Have a cigar. How long'll you be stayin', d'ye think?"

John Terrance had worked hard for that money, and its sudden loss angered him. He flew into a rage and vowed he would tell the police that the hotel harbored rogues and encouraged them to fleece unsuspecting guests. He talked in a loud voice and struck the desk with his fist. Soon he was surrounded by a group of guests who were grateful for the diversion, and encouraged him to talk on so that they might find out if he had any change left. The clerk,

whose long experience amongst keys bearing number plates, had taught him how to humor a dissatisfied guest, resisted the temptation to call a porter, and allowed the irate man to exhaust himself. Then he led him into a small sitting-room behind the bar.

"Now, don't get rattled," he said, pressing a button. "Sit down and have something on me."

The bartender came in and polished the table top.

"What yer goin' to have, gents?" he asked.

"Manhattan—little absinthe, Len," said the clerk, lighting another of the house's cigars.

"And yours?" asked the "wine clerk," turning to John.

John Terrance had never touched liquor in his life and might not have done so now had he not been disheartened by that experience in frog estate. But the clerk's friendly attitude, the comfort of the room, the smell of the cigar, the babel of voices he could hear in the bar, the frequent burst of laughter, combined to make him reckless and he said the first word that reached his lips.

"Whiskey."

An hour later he sat in his bedroom, pen in hand, writing the letter to Barbara. A half-smoked cigar lay on the washstand and his coat and vest hung on one of the brass knobs of the bed. His eyes were red and watery and his hand trembled.

In the morning he found the electric light still burning and the letter sealed and addressed. Almost forgetting its contents he took it out after breakfast

and dropped it into a letterbox. Then the whole complexion of the city seemed to change. The day was bright but everything wore a frown. Store windows appeared to have an unusual quantity of black in their dressing, and the men's faces looked cold and hard. Yesterday everything moved leisurely; to-day the speed at which men, women and vehicles travelled was terrific. A man he had observed nearing him would dash past and be out of sight before he could turn around; and women walked as if fleeing from an evil. Paper boys shouted words he could not understand and darted in and out in a manner that made him think of infernal imps. Street cars and cabs were driven at a furious pace and each time he crossed the street he felt that his life had been saved by a miracle.

Nobody seemed to care whether he lived or died. When he asked the way he thought policemen eyed him suspiciously and began to wonder if after all a Canadian wife-deserter could not be arrested in the States. At noon he had no appetite for dinner and wished it were nearer bedtime—the day was phenomenally long. He craved for something to enliven him and looking at a billboard he saw a flaring picture of a clownish act at a burlesque show, and read the description of the entertainment.

“Ten of the funniest comedians in the world.”

“Bright, catchy music that makes the boys in the gallery whistle.”

“Two roaring burlesques.”

"Six special features in the olio."

"Fifty of the prettiest and sprightliest girls on the burlesque stage."

"Every maid a dream."

He thought that would be just the sort of place to cheer him up, just the place for a man with a conscience, and he got a ticket for a seat near the front. This was his first appearance in a playhouse and the place made him stare. The woodwork was in cream and gold and the drop curtain represented a scene of sylvan beauty in myriad colors. He noticed that nearly all the front seats were occupied by middle-aged and elderly men, all well dressed and evidently business men who could afford two and a half hours away from their desks.

He noticed that there were no ladies present and that nearly everybody smoked. Boys in white coats passed up and down the aisles selling peanuts, chewing gum, popcorn, candy, cigars, cigarettes and song books. At two-fifteen the orchestra came in from beneath the stage. In a few minutes the footlights went up and the lights in all other parts of the house went down. The band crashed out the opening bars of a jingling tune, written by a well known young gentleman who understands the humanity of an audience and gratifies its ignorance with a finished product of his own.

The curtain went up and this simple farmer found himself looking upon a bevy of the "prettiest and sprightliest girls on the burlesque stage," whose chief

ambition it seemed to be to wear as few clothes as possible and to obliterate all traces of age and physical blemish by grease-paint. Throughout the afternoon they conscientiously rendered the scientific services for which they were paid from fifteen to eighteen dollars a week, part of those services being to form a dazzling setting for a very plain "leading lady" whose efforts to make the audience believe she was fifty years younger than she really was, entitled her to a place of honor among the Carnegie heroes.

The "ten funniest comedians in the world" appeared to have a very poor opinion of the intelligence of their audience and succeeded in being everything but funny.

John Terrance appreciated none of the bill of fare that was being served that afternoon. His taste had not been educated. During an Oriental dance and in some incomprehensible manner he suddenly caught sight of Barbara's face and cried aloud. Men all round him thought he had drunk too much and an usher in a mimic police tunic seized his arm and told him he would have to control his passions or get out. What happened after that he never knew. When he awoke next morning he was in a police station. The man at the desk talked kindly, telling him he had fallen into the hands of bad men and been robbed of his last dollar. There would be no charge laid against him; he had better get some work. Good morning.

As he was passing out a smart young Salvation

Army officer met him. At a glance he knew that this was one of the "cases" he should tackle.

"Good morning. Had breakfast?" he asked cheerily.

"No."

"Come along then and have some with me. Hallo, sergeant. See you later." (This with a fantastic hand wave.)

John suffered himself to be led to a near-by restaurant and was about to sit down to a plain meal, when he turned suddenly on the man at his side.

"I'm a Catholic," he said abruptly.

"That don't cut any figure," answered the sunny-faced Samaritan, "you're hungry, ain't you? Sit down."

After breakfast the army man asked him if he had work. He told him no.

"I see you're a farmer."

"Yes."

"Canadian?"

"Yes. How do you know?"

"Fur cap. Want a job?"

"Yes."

"Come on."

"I'm not going to your church."

"Don't want you to."

"Where's the work?"

"On a farm, away out."

"Haven't got any money."

"Didn't ask you if you had. We'll find it."

"Got to pay it back?"

"You don't have to. Got a conscience, I s'pose?"

He started so at the word the army officer stepped to one side to look at him.

"Not feeling well?" he asked.

"I'm all right."

"Got any friends in Canada?"

"Yes."

"Wife?"

"No."

"Then I've got just the place to suit you. The boss is a Methodist, but he's good-hearted and broad-minded. You can go to your own church on Sundays, and if you are a good Catholic he'll respect you."

"Why do you take all this bother?"

"Because Christ died. Come into the office and I'll fix you up."

CHAPTER XXX.

BARBARA IS AGAIN DENIED.

GILES' FARM was a bare-looking old place about six miles from the boundaries of Chicago. The house stood near the main road and was a strange mixture of city and rural architecture. In this respect it resembled its owner, Daniel Giles. He had snowy hair, shaggy eyebrows, shaven lips and a pointed chin whisker; his shoulders were broad, but a little bent, his body well proportioned and carried through life upon a pair of legs as true and straight as the character of their owner, and as strong as those of any university athlete. Strangers called him "Uncle Sam," but to his neighbors he was "Uncle Daniel," clear headed, keen eyed, plain spoken, stout hearted and as daring as his prototype. When his grandchildren sang the familiar hymn.

"Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone;
Dare to have a purpose firm,
And dare to make it known,"

he was the Daniel they thought of, he was the man to do and dare.

His wife Sarah had not worn so well; her back was bent and traces of hard work lay upon her face.

Together they had faced adversity; together they had won the uphill fight; but the strain had been hard upon her.

They were sitting in the kitchen after supper, their only unmarried daughter, Phoebe, playing the squeaky organ that stood near the stove, when John Terrance presented the letter of introduction from the Salvation Army officer. Uncle Daniel read the missive, then eyed him through and through.

"Ever farmed in the States?" he asked, keeping up the scrutiny.

John, afraid of questions, proceeded to say that he had had a good deal of experience in Canada; that he was sure there was nothing he could not do on a farm.

"Don't boast, me boy; Canady ain't part of the U-nited States yet; and things be a little diff'rent over there, I guess," said the old man in a rich nasal voice. His eyes twinkled beneath their forests and as he said this his left hand slid down the whisker on his chin. When it neared the end it stopped and two of his fingers turned the point upwards.

"I see you're a Roman Catholic. Be that so?" he went on, eyeing the man before him.

"Yes," came the abrupt answer.

"We're Methodists and I hope we won't bother you with our way of doin' things. There be a mighty diff'rance between the two religions, but ev'ry man has a right to worship God in his own way. Ain't that so, Sarah?"

The old lady hastened to agree with her white-

haired hero and recalled the time when their hired man was a Mormon.

"I don't know how many wives he had, but he didn't bring them here," she said, laughingly.

Uncle Daniel glanced again at the letter.

"Says you're single. Be that so?" he asked.

For the second time within forty-eight hours did the "conscience" stricken John Terrance deny his wife. He began to dread these questions. Oh, to be out in the fields behind a plough, seeing the earth rise from her frost-bound grave to don once more the lovelier garb of spring, hearing the birds as they call to their mates, and feeling the sweet spring air upon his hot and aching head. In a moment he would get up and go. Would he be able to live in this old man's house? Why did not the Army officer find him a Catholic home, *or a place where there was no religion at all?* Ah, that would have been best of all. He could then have minded his business and they would have minded theirs; now he would be tortured daily with Methodism; there was their Sankey and Moody Book of Praise on the organ.

When he went to bed that night he heard Uncle Daniel praying downstairs, and something impelled him to listen. It was an exhaustive supplication and towards the end reference was made to him.

"O Lord, bless him, whoever he be," prayed the old man, fervently. "He seems to be troubled about something; do Thou help him. Let him know that he kin find rest in the Lord Jesus; mebbe he has a deep sorrow in his heart; tell him that Thy dear

Son came into the world to take away all sorrow and sighin' and to wipe away all tears. Bless him, Lord."

He sat on the bedside until it ended, then put out the lamp and undressed in the dark.

"There's somethin' wrong upstairs, Sarah," said the old man, rising from his knees.

"I hope he ain't done nothin' serious. The Army gits hold of some queer cases. But I've always found the men they've sent here all right--little queer, some of 'em, but good at heart. We mustn't let him notice what we think. If the poor feller has a trouble let's help him. It would have bin hard fer us if a kind hand or two hadn't bin put out when we wuz strugglin'."

"That seems to be a mighty new Saratoga he's brot, Daniel," said his wife.

"And he don't seem to want to say much about his people," chimed in Phoebe.

"Wa-al, we kaint tell what it means and we kin do nobler things than pry into his business. You remember what Stevenson sez in that book of Phoebe's,

"There be so much bad in the best of us,
And so much good in the worst of us,
That 'tain't fair fer any of us
To talk about the rest of us."

Uncle Daniel, lamp in hand, creaked his way upstairs to bed. John's door was closed but he heard his step and called out, "Who's that?"

"Jest me," answered the old man. "Kaint yer git ter sleep?"

"Strange bed," came the brief reply.

CHAPTER XXXI.

UNCLE DANIEL UP IN ARMS.

"Religion is man's communion with God. The church is but an instrument."—*Anon.*

UNCLE DANIEL received a Chicago newspaper each day and after supper read aloud such items as he thought might interest his wife and daughter. He believed everything he saw in a newspaper, including the advertisements. This mighty faith in humanity helped to keep him a happy, trusting, hopeful old man. During the "silly season," when the resourceful newspaper writers frolicked in the sunshine of their readers' simple faith and made sea-lions frisk about in the Atlantic, and whales, with human heads, perform more marvellous feats than the big fish which entertained Jonah, he read the stories as earnestly as he read the Bible. His philosophy told him that nothing was too wonderful to appear in a world made by God. After drawling out a column of fiction he would drop the paper on his knees and, looking over his glasses at his wife, say, "Don't that beat everything, Sarah? But it's true; it's right here in the paper."

The only time he showed signs of doubt was when he read that a syndicate had been formed to finance

a proposed tunnel under the Atlantic, so that a train service could be given between New York and London.

"Waal, ain't that a corker? They'll never do it," he declared.

"I guess the paper's wrong," said his wife.

Taking another look at the article he said, "Waal, now as I come to think of it, Sarah, mebbe it's right. I see it says that Edison is doin' the plans."

It was the second week of John's work as hired man. He had wisely changed his name to John Farrey. Uncle Daniel marvelled at the perfection of his work; his furrows were so straight men came miles to see them; and his resourcefulness knew no limits. He repaired the binder and drained a field with an expertness that caused the old man to tell his wife that he believed the hired man had "owned a farm, one time." He did not seem to tire, and he ate his meals quick enough to satisfy a Canadian farmer in harvest time. The house held no attraction for him; he liked to be alone and at work; the harder the task the better he was pleased. He found that flaying his body with gruelling work eased his mind. One day it rained so hard he could not plough; instead, he transferred the manure pile from its accustomed place for twenty years to a more convenient situation.

"He won't talk and I kaint git him to rest," said Uncle Daniel after the sixth day he had been with them.

"I never seen such a man fer work. He'll kill himself, sure," said his wife.

"Shiftin' that pile was the craziest thing a man ever done," continued the old man.

"Why didn't you stop him?" asked Phoebe.

"Might have taken it into his head to tear the roof off the barn."

"No fear."

"Why, I seed him carry a plough three times round the lower field y' orday and nearly fall down under the weight."

"Is he crazy?" asked the old lady nervously.

"Nope. I ask why he done it and he says fer exercise."

"I guess it's penance, pa," said Phoebe. She had been reading a sensational and untrue story about Roman Catholicism.

"Never thought of that. Guess that's jest what 'tis," agreed Uncle Daniel.

On the Friday of the second week at Giles' Farm John Terrance settled down, with Mrs. Giles and Phoebe, to hear the news. He did not make comments as the others did when appealed to, but sat in moody silence. For a long time the old man read to himself, then, putting down the paper, he removed his silver-rimmed spectacles and polished them with the corner of the tablecloth. There were tears in his eyes.

"Sarah, listen," he said, impressively.

Under flaring headlines the story of the reading

of the decree in St. Peter's Church, Marysville, and its effect upon the Terrance homestead was told in sensational and, in places, brutal detail. No phase of the miserable affair was neglected. A vivid picture was drawn of the "perfect happiness" to be found at Hillcrest Farm prior to that Sunday when the priest entered the pulpit to shoot the arrow that poisoned a husband against his home. A merciless Protestant pen tore the decree to shreds and denounced its authors as "tyrants seeking to restore to Rome the temporal power she possessed in the days of the 'Holy Roman Empire,' when Pope Gregory VII. lashed secular rulers into submission and made the titular lord of the world stand barefoot in the snow three days, waiting absolution from the lips of a priest."

The writer told of John Terrance's flight from what he called the "path of duty" and referred to him as "a priest-governed coward," afraid to stand by the vows he had made to a trusting woman in the presence of one of God's ministers because, in his ignorance and superstition, he imagined he had sinned against the Church, and would receive eternal punishment if he continued to keep his vows.

The story gave a graphic, but of course largely imaginary, account of Barbara's mental sufferings; of her visit to the priest and the accident which followed, and raised up Felix as a hero for his peerless devotion to his mother. It spoke of the storm the desertion had created amongst Protestants, and

prophesied a mountain of Catholic as well as Protestant opposition to any attempt the Church of Rome might make to annul mixed marriages because they had not taken place before a priest, or the marriages of two Catholics performed by a Protestant clergyman or a civil officer empowered by the law to perform such ceremonies.

The women cried during the reading and the old man stopped once or twice to clean his glasses. Throughout it all the hired man sat without betraying signs of life, his chin had dropped upon his chest, his eyes were closed; his hands thrust deep in his trousers pockets. They thought he had gone to sleep before the reading began. When the old man came to the end of the story he looked up and said, "Sarah, that is the worst I've read yet, and it makes me feel sort of uncharitable towards a fellowman. I'm surprised at any man doin' what this John Terrance done. It jest shows ye how easy a man kin git a wrong idea in his head and how hard it is to git it out. This man has brought all this turrible sufferin' upon his wife and little lad and broken the home all up and filled the little lad's heart with misery when it should jest be 'ubblin' over with joy, and turned his wife into a broken-hearted cripple that won't ever again see all the beautiful sunshine that's in the world, only dark clouds and rain and winds and storms, all because he thinks his conscience is speekin', when it's nothin' but his deceitful heart. I kaint understand that

priest allowin' such a thing to take place, but I s'pose he puts his church first and there's this here law comes along and it's got to be so. 'Tis too bad, too bad!"

At that moment the hired man looked up and stared about him as though his reason had fled.

"Oh, my! what a look!" cried Phoebe, as she bounded over to where her father sat.

"What ever's the matter with the man?" exclaimed the old lady, following suit.

"Ain't yer feelin' well, son?" asked Uncle Daniel.

The voice was so friendly, the words so kind, that John took courage.

The old man walked over to him. "What seems to be wrong with yer?"

"I'm John Terrance," came the startling reply.

The old man fell back as if struck by a fist, but quickly righted himself; mother and daughter clasped their hands and trembled at the thought of what might come next. Neither spoke.

"Let me get out of this," cried the miserable man, rising.

Striding over to the door Uncle Daniel placed his back against it and faced the man who had asked to be let out. Both men were of a height, their bodies well matched, the muscles of their arms "strong as iron bands." But Uncle Daniel was an old man, and the man he faced was in his prime.

"An' so you're the man that's left your wife and little lad in Canady because yer want to save yerself

from hell," began the white-haired farmer in measured tones.

The man before him did not answer.

"Did ye know she would break her heart about yer goin', cryin' inside of herself each day, an' wonderin' every minute ef yer would come back, and sittin' up at nights watchin' out of the winder to see ef yer wuz comin' down the road, and tellin' yure little lad that she knew his dad would come back and start the home agoin' a--ain? Did ye?"

Unable to stand the old man's torturing questions John Terrance stepped threateningly forward.

"Stand to one side; let me out," he shouted angrily, drawing back his arm as if to strike a blow.

The expression on the old man's face did not alter as he raised his right arm and shot it out straight before him.

"Ef yer come near me I'll knock yer down," he said, in a steady voice.

"Oh, don't, don't, don't," cried the women rushing towards the antagonists. His wife laid a restraining hand upon Uncle Daniel's arm but he bade her leave him alone and stand back. Retiring like two frightened children to the furthest corner of the room, wife and daughter watched events.

"John Terrance," said Uncle Daniel in a voice that showed no fear, "I be an old man now and I kaint remember the time when I struck a feller man, but the black deed that ye've done has filled me heart with grief, and now 'tis yew or me fer it. Ye've done

the cruel'st thing yew ever done and 'taint right fer yew to git through this world with things all yer own way, while the woman an' lad yew deserted are mebbe hungerin' fer bread. Ef ye've a spark of the man in yer ye'll go back right now, afore it's too late, and protect them two trustin' hearts from all the cruel things they're havin' to bear. I sez ef ye've a bit of the man left in ye that's what ye'll do. Ef yew ain't, then with God's help I'm goin' to lick it inter ye."

The old man looked magnificent when he hurled the threat at the scowling figure before him, but his wife and daughter trembled at his words and pleaded tearfully for him to stop. John hesitated to strike the blow that would have disfigured that noble old face; yet his anger at being thwarted increased every moment.

"Let me out or I'll get out," he shouted fiercely.

"Promise ter be a man and do the square thing an' I'll say no more, son," said Uncle Daniel in a quieter voice. "Ye know I kinder like the way ye've bin doin' things around here, and I was gettin' a mighty high opinion of ye; but now this thing comes along and I sort o' kaint feel the same, but I'm willin' to like ye agin and help ye back to the farm an' the little lad who mebbe ain't lost faith in his dad. Say ye'll go, son."

He moved from the door and laid a hand on the shoulder of John Terrance.

"Say ye'll go, son. It's all a mistake, but God'll

fergive ye. Bring back the roses to her cheeks and the happy smile to the lad's face. I'll see ye through; I'll go with ye and we'll face it all, then I'll come back from Canady and jest go on the same ole way and mebbe the Army'll send me another chap who's man enough to do the right. Will ye go, son?"

The old man leaned forward so that his face almost touched that of his hired man. John braved the look; anger had gone from his countenance. He had learned to respect this old giant.

"I'll go back," he said in a broken voice.

"Sarah, d'ye hear him? Phoebe, d'ye hear him? He sez he'll go back and make her happy agin, and make the little lad happy and proud of his dad. An' he won't mind what the priest sez, but will do what God tells him."

Closing his eyes, and turning his face upwards, Uncle Daniel, in a voice shaking with emotion, said, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow."

CHAPTER XXXII.

A PRIEST CHANGES JOHN'S PLANS.

UNCLE DANIEL sent his wife and daughter to bed and he and John talked far into the night. The old man's rugged candor dragged a confession from the lips of the penitent, more honest than any he had poured into the ears of his priest.

"Ye've got ter do yer own thinkin', son," said Uncle Daniel in his drawl. "God gave ye a head, jest the same as He gave ye a wife, an' he don't mean ye ter let a priest take persession of one and separate ye from t'other."

"We've been taught that the Church takes care of us," said John, mournfully.

"God took mighty good care of His people long before the Roman Church was born; an' it seems ter me that He still watches them in His own lovin' way, notwithstandin' the attempts the priests make ter show that the Church be more important than God Himself. Son, never let the Church, as ye call it, come between yer heart and God," went on the old evangelist warningly.

"The Church helps us to get near God," said the potter's clay.

Uncle Daniel frowned at this reference to inter-

mediary power and might have laughed or sneered at the belief, but his compassion was great for the man before him.

"That's wrong, son," he said, solemnly. "God never put anythin' whatsoever between the human heart and the Throne o' Grace. The devil gits there sometimes, coz that's his business."

John Terrance failed to follow the old man and suggested bed. An hour later he was in the land of dreams—fated to awake next morning drenched in a sweat of fear that his resolution to return to Barbara was wrong. He brooded as he dressed, and contrived how best he could leave the farm alone, so that if second thoughts prevailed he might not be forced into going back to Canada.

His dream had been one filled with horrors. He had seen himself in a wilderness watching strange creatures rush wildly past him, their fleshless bodies making gruesome, rattling noises as they ran on, and on, and on. He saw one fall and spoke to it.

"I'm the tortured spirit of a man who sinned against the Church," it said.

Another of the weird creatures, built on a slender plan, dropped where the other had fallen. It told him it was the spirit of a young girl who had sinned secretly and lied at confession. And so the spirits fell from the ranks of the runners one by one, until they became a great heap of rattling, moaning skeletons. And while he looked he heard a mighty roar as of thunder, and fell back in fright. The air

became so hot that his clothes dried to cinder. Then, with a noise the like of which had never reached human ears, he saw a mountain of fire come out of the darkness and fall like an avalanche upon the pile of spirits, devouring them so that not a bone was left, then disappear again into the darkness. The air grew cold, causing his body to ache beyond endurance.

Trusting in his fellow-man to the last, Uncle Daniel took John's word that he would return to Canada. His trunk was already on its way.

The women made up a lunch and from a much-worn leather purse the old man took a bill.

"Son, I ain't a rich man," he said, addressing the departing guest; "Sarah and me has hed to work hard fer what we've got, but it's a mighty great pleasure I have in givin' ye the money ter take ye back ter yer wife an' laddie. God sent ye here; let Him guide ye back. Keep Him near ye. I'll trust ye to go, coz ye gave me yer word ye'd go; I've got faith in ye."

Taking John's hand in his own and laying another on the broad shoulder before him, wife and daughter, their faces wet with tears of joy, standing at his side, Uncle Daniel pronounced a benediction.

Grouped in the doorway of the old house they watched him out of sight.

He had a clear hour to spare when he reached the city terminals and determined to find a priest, tell him of his resolution and his dream, and ask for a

would of encouragement. He would then bid farewell to Chicago. He asked a policeman for the address of a priest and lost no time in getting to his confessor.

Father Bonar, a Jesuit, was a cold, stern-faced man and betrayed no sympathy for the simple man who poured out his hopes and fears. The housekeeper had taken him into the library, a place as cold and as stern as the priest who received him.

When John had finished his story, Father Bonar, whose intellect had won fame for him in the world of letters and whose zeal for the Church was ever pointed to as an example for younger priests, turned his steel-grey eyes upon his visitor and told him he must regard his "vision" of the night before as a solemn warning from God. He had done right in leaving his wife "for conscience sake" and must fortify himself against the subtleties of the Evil One, who would seize every available opportunity to make him believe his conscience was deceiving him. He further comforted the bewildered man by telling him he had displayed wretched frailty in believing a man outside the pale of the true Church, who imbibed his ideas from the Protestant Bible, "a dangerous book, teeming with errors and false teaching."

"Keep the Church before you day and night," he said. "Fight down the heresies that tempt you to take your eyes from our Lord, whose body you are again crucifying when you live in sin."

The priest spoke so coldly John found no comfort in his words. The severity of his manner, however, intensified the warning and he left the house convinced that the simple-hearted, God-fearing Methodist was wrong and that John Terrance, in succumbing to his words had been forced to the edge of the eternal chasm; that the advice of the priest had saved him from tumbling over; and that if he wished to keep his feet he must obey his "conscience," which was saying now what it had said before—"You did not receive the Sacrament of Matrimony, therefore your union was unholy in the sight of—the Church."

The following day Uncle Daniel received a note enclosing all but two dollars of the amount he had given the man he tried to aid.

"I am sending your money back, all but two dollars. I'll send that when I earn it," ran the message. "I couldn't make up my mind, so I went to a priest. I am not going back to Canada."

The old man read the note to his wife and daughter. He betrayed nothing of the heart-ache he felt at the failure of his efforts. Turning to the women he said slowly, "I didn't know 'xactly how big the task I had wuz. Ef he's ter be saved we've got ter fight the Church of Rome. We kaint do it *that* way; we must do it by prayer."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

EDITOR'S VIEWS ON A HOOK.

ST. PAUL'S RECTORY,
MARYSVILLE, ONT.

March, 19—.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—“Since my last letter a terrible thing has happened. Driven by the *Ne Temere* decree to imagine that his marriage with a Protestant girl did not find favor in the sight of the Roman Church, the father of Felix Terrance deserted his wife and son a month ago, and is now living in the States. After waiting two weeks, the wife, Barbara, a noble-hearted, loving woman, courageously went to see the priest and learn from him the meaning of her husband's extraordinary conduct. The only sympathy she received was the information that the decree did not say that such a marriage as his, taking place so many years ago, would not be recognized by the Church, and that his action was entirely due to the voice of conscience.

“On the road home Mrs. Terrance was thrown from the cutter, and now lies in a hospital with a broken leg and other injuries. Owing to the terrible strain upon her nerves caused by her husband's cruel desertion, she stands a poor chance of ever being restored completely to health.

"Her splendid little son, Felix, for whom I have such admiration, is with his mother every day. His tenderness is pathetic. While away from her he rarely smiles. I have him with me at the Rectory. When not at the hospital he sits in the study or in my bed-room and reads. I have carefully chosen his books, chiefly with a view to taking his mind from a melancholy channel and assuaging an inclination he has to harbor angry feelings towards his father. Yesterday I found him sitting in the window seat of the study, his knees up and clasped by his hands. Turning his thoughtful brown eyes upon me he said, 'Mr. Lloyd, must a Christian always forgive?' I told him yes, most decidedly, and of course pointed to the Great Example in His hour of crucifixion. He heard me through and I was congratulating myself upon having been able to make so good an impression when he coolly told me that I need never count upon him becoming a Christian.

"'But, Felix,' I said, 'surely there is no one in the world whom you could not forgive?'

"He would not answer.

"The rector thinks he is a remarkable boy, with the makings of a very good or very bad man in him. He often talks to him, and when I entered the study one morning last week I found the old gentleman sitting with his hand resting lovingly upon the boy's head, Felix being seated on the rug at his feet.

"The night before last, while we were dressing for bed, he suddenly asked me to tell him the Ter-

once been a clergyman in the English Church and a priest of Rome. I doubted whether he could understand if I did tell him and said so. But he insisted 'I asked you because I want to understand.' What would you do with a boy like that, mother?

Last Wednesday afternoon I found the boxing glove- I had found on the bed; he had unearthed them. He was in the hospital, but on his return he told me on one side and whispered, 'I've got something upstairs I want to show you.' After supper he preceded me upstairs with a much livelier step than usual, and I began to think he was cheering up. On entering my room he pointed to the corner and said in his most serious manner, 'Please come to box, Mr. Lloyd; I want to be able to beat someone bigger than myself.' I told him that that were his only object in wishing to learn boxing should not teach him. He colored slightly and asked me if I was afraid he might beat me. That settled it, of course, as he intended it should, and we have had several bouts. During their progress he tells me to hit him and in turn gives quarter. He is very strong and knocked me off my feet this morning. In an instant he was all sympathy and, rushing forward to help me up, he said in cold-blooded tones, 'I'm glad I'm strong enough to knock a man down. I didn't think I was.'

"Felix' Uncle Jim has rented Hillcrest Farm. When Mrs. Terrance leaves the hospital she will live

with her boy in a quaint cottage near the river front in Marysville. She is very proud and declines to touch any revenue from the farm while her husband is away. She has some three or four hundred dollars of her own and had intended to live on it while it lasted, then find means of earning more; but a brother in Philadelphia, and Jim in Chippendale, have arranged to provide for their sister in a generous manner. I do not know what they are going to do with Felix. His ambition was to be a doctor, but when his father went away he determined to devote himself to the farm for his mother's sake. He is a brave boy. I love him.

"It is terrible, is it not, mother, that a man married for nearly fourteen years and in all respects a good husband, should be suddenly impelled to take such an awful step. It is not really the voice of conscience he hears; man's heart so often deceives him; and so we see him hearing a voice that tells him he is sinning when he is not doing anything of the kind, and terrifying him into believing that if he does not repent—which, of course, means leave his wife—an awful punishment awaits him in the next world. In his fear he runs away. I have no doubt he is utterly miserable.

"After the accident the whole story became known and the affairs of Hillcrest Farm afforded a topic for gossip night and day. Our dear Mrs. Mutch, of whom I have spoken before, ceased at once to perform household duties and converted herself into a

sort of travelling newspaper, containing all the latest news with a colored supplement. She is quite remarkable. During her grand tour she ran across Father McCarthy and inflicted upon him a severe tongue-lashing. He told me what she said—or rather some of what she said—and sarcastically added that she should be engaged to write a history of the Church of Rome, which might include a prophecy of its downfall. He asked me where she got all the 'diabolical fables' about Rome, and suggested that she may be a reincarnation of Baron Munchausen, with the sex changed.

"After her tirade against the priest she published a special colored supplement of herself and so inflamed the parish I found that many of our hot-headed people appeared to think I should make a violent attack upon the circumspect person of the old priest. One woman vowed that if ever the Father came within fifty rods of her husband's farm he would never forget it. I asked her what on earth she thought of doing, and she pointed to an old shot-gun. I thought this was going too far and spoke sternly, reminding her of her profession of Christianity. In fact I went further, and told her I would not expect to see her at church until she felt in a better frame of mind. She really felt sorry for her wicked attitude and before I left asked me to forgive her.

"And so it was all over the parish. The editor of the weekly paper made himself so very hot over

the matter I told him he might set fire to the half-ton of old newspapers through which I had to plough before reaching him.

“‘Mr. Lloyd,’ he said, sweeping the top of his desk, ‘the priests have too much power as it is in this country and we should fight tooth and nail against further encroachments upon the liberty of the subject. This decree (he swore, I think) gives them power to invade the homes and steal men and women from their legal partners, shattering the joys of the hearth and blanching the faces of little children.’

“I told him I quite realized the serious effect the enforcement of such a law would have, but that I thought violent outbursts of wrath would not go far towards achieving the end we had in view, viz., safeguarding the sanctity of marriage; that we must work determinately and quickly to prevent the Church of Rome or any other religious organization from imperilling the fundamental basis of our social system.

“For this I was called a ‘Roman proselyte,’ and almost turned out of the literary confusion in which I was then standing up to my knees. During the intervals he devoted to regaining his breath, I jocularly suggested that he send a written exposition of his views to Father McCarthy.

“‘You’re late,’ he cried. ‘I wrote six columns of editorial and sent it to him. The boy who took it told me he glared at it, scribbled a note, re-addressed

the editorial to the man who advertises on the back page and burst out laughing.'

"Of course I was anxious to know what happened next.

" 'Well,' he said with a sigh, 'you know how it is. I can't afford to lose all that space. There's the stuff on the hook!'

"It was quite sad, mother, to see the ideals, the principles, the opinions of an editor hanging on a hook. I could not but feel sorry for a man who had to still his tongue, or rather his pen, that he might feed his body.

"Felix has just come in to tell me that Nurse Margaret says his mother is very much better to-day. I do not see how she could be otherwise under such wonderful care. Nurse Margaret is thought a great deal of by the patients.

"The rector and Mrs. Reid are going to have their first real holiday for nearly sixteen years and Felix and I are to keep 'bach' for six weeks. I leave you to imagine, dear mother, what a time we shall have—that is, if Mrs. Terrance continues to improve under the gentle touch of Nurse—the nurses."

"Love to all.

"Your affectionate son,

"DAVID."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A VICTIM OF THE DECREE.

"Be the day weary or be the day long
At length it ringeth to evensong."

THERE is a tranquility about the metaphor which appeals to the mind, and it is doubtful if there be any word in the English language so expressive of perfect calm as "evensong." It always seems the essence of loveliness, and there is a quaintness about it that endears it to all.

It was Sunday evening, the end of Barbara's fourth week in the hospital. Her limbs were mending rapidly, but the shock had brought great weakness to the heart. Her face bore no color, but her eyes had regained their lustre. The curate had gone to service, and Felix was sitting with his mother, telling her of his life at the quiet old rectory; of Mr. Lloyd's kindness; of the pleasant hours they spent together; of the wonderful books he read. Nurse Margaret opened the window at the far end of the room, and a gentle breeze wafted the music of St. Paul's bell to their ears. The sun's course was almost run, and the sombre greys of eventide were creeping into the sky. The hour was replete with the joyous notes of risen life. Fragrant flowers stood near the bed.

Nature had sung her sweetest songs that day, songs that told of life and hope and joy. The color-changing grasses had triumphed over death and lived again in smiling beauty, and spring's earliest flowers told of their glad release from winter's captivity.

When the bell had ceased, Nurse Margaret played an evening hymn, the music reaching them through the open door. Barbara and her boy ceased speaking.

"Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee;
Help of the helpless, O abide with me."

Barbara held the boy's hand in her own, pressing it tightly to her heart, and when the hymn was ended spoke to him, pausing now and then as if finding it difficult to breathe.

"Felix, dear, God has been kind in giving you a friend like Mr. Lloyd. He is a noble man. You must strive to be like him."

"I can't ever be as good, mother," replied the boy.

"You must try; always seek his advice; allow him to guide you."

"I will, mother."

She ceased speaking for a few moments, as if unable to go on. Felix wanted to call the nurse, but she restrained him by a gentle touch, telling him she was already better.

"Felix, dear, I sometimes wonder if I did all I could to keep your father near us. His faith made

it hard for me to understand his feelings; but oh, how I loved him."

The boy heard, but made no response. He knew that for him to have expressed his thoughts then would have been to fill her heart with pain. Wisely he held his peace. After another long pause she went on, in calmer tones.

"It must be terrible for him to be without his home; he cannot be happy, and I know that his mind is not really at rest. If I thought it was, this would be easier to bear. Some day he may return."

The boy turned his face away that she might not see his tears. Her silence was longer this time, and when he turned to look at her beautiful face her eyelids had drooped, the long silken lashes resting upon the white velvet of her face. Oh, how calm she looked!

Barbara must have felt the love and admiration in his look, for just then she opened her eyes. Raising her unbandaged arm she held it as if inviting him to come.

"Kiss me, dear," she said, as he bent over the pillow.

When their lips met her arm encircled the boy's neck, and she held him close to her bosom. They remained thus for several minutes. Then, in a faint voice that ended in a whisper she said, "Felix—dear—tell him I—for—give."

The boy felt the arm about his neck stiffen, and he gently freed himself. A great terror seized him,

and he uttered a piercing shriek that echoed throughout the house and brought Nurse Mary and Nurse Edith running to the room. As the startled Felix flung himself upon the body of his mother and cried, Oh, mamma, mamma, mamma! speak to me! Don't die; don't leave me alone, mamma, my lovely mamma, speak!"

The nurses raised the grief-stricken lad and Margaret took him in her arms, pillowing his head upon her breast. A glance had told them that the heart of the mother had failed. Wrenching himself from her loving arms, Felix rushed from the house in the direction of St. Paul's Church. The sacred place was filled, and the curate was reading the collect for aid against perils.

"Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord; and by Thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of Thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*"

Passing the verger in the ivy-covered porch the boy ran down the centre aisle, crying wildly, "Mr. Lloyd, mother's dead! mother's dead!"

The congregation was thrown into a panic, and men and women leapt from their seats. The curate, understanding in a moment what it meant, rose from his place at the reading desk, and placing his arm about the neck of the excited boy, bade him be calm. The folds of his surplice partly screened Felix from view. Standing thus, he turned his face to the congregation, a soft ray of light falling upon him from

a stained window. Raising his right hand to command peace, he pronounced the benediction, then bade the people disperse.

With his arm still about the boy's neck he led him into the vestry. The latticed windows were open, and a cool breeze, laden with perfume, fanned their faces. Closing the door, he took the broken-hearted boy by the hands.

"Felix, God has permitted this to happen. Let us not question His purpose, but ask Him to give us strength to say 'Thy will be done.'"

His voice calmed the boy, and Felix turned a stern young face towards him.

"Mr. Lloyd, mamma forgave him before she died. I never will."

"That is unchristian, Felix," said the curate.

"I'm not a Christian, then," replied the rebellious boy, with an earnestness that brought a shudder over the strong young man before him.

"Felix," he said, solemnly, "do not wage war against God. He loves you."

"Then why did He let him leave us, and kill mamma?"

"He will make it plain. Let us go home."

CHAPTER XXXV.

FELIX PENS A CHALLENGE.

"My Mary, dear, departed shade,
Where is thy place of heavenly rest?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend this breast?"

THE day of Barbara's funeral opened with a gentle spring rain, followed soon by brilliant sunshine which gleamed through the bud-laden trees in the rectory garden, making the dripping branches look like diamond-studded stems flashing a thousand colors in the heavenly light. Felix had visited the room in which his mother lay the night before, and had left her looking calm and sweet amid a profusion of floral tributes, the equal of which had not been seen in Marysville. To his eye she seemed to be sleeping in a garden. He could not believe she was dead, and touched her marble cheek with his finger, calling her by name. Uncle Jim and Aunt Hannah were with him at the time, and their sorrow for the boy was great.

On the following morning he dressed without speaking, and Mr. Lloyd sought to divert his thoughts from the approaching service by drawing his attention to the awaking life around him in the natural world. In the midst of a sentence he interrupted

the curate with a question which showed how far were his thoughts from the subject.

"Mr. Lloyd, why does God so often punish people who are doing right, and let wicked men go free?"

"I know what you mean, Felix, and shall answer by asking you a question. Do you think that God was punishing your mother?"

"It looked like that, but I don't know what for. She never did any wrong."

"Was her end not peace?"

"Yes."

"Do you think that the close of a sinner's life will be peace?"

"I hope not."

"Then can you believe that she, whose heart was filled with the peace of God, when she passed away had been punished by the hand of Him whose Holy Spirit had kept her through life?"

Felix told him candidly that he saw no blessing in taking his mother's home from her, and later killing her. It was as far as his reason could carry him, and he burst into a fit of passionate weeping. When it was over he took off the black suit that had been bought and laid it aside.

"He's not going to make me wear that," he said, sternly.

"Felix, Felix, do not be so bitter towards your father," cried the curate.

"Don't call him that any more," said the boy, peremptorily.

"Then, if he's not your father the priest was right, and your mother was wrong," declared the young clergyman.

It was a telling point, and brought the angry boy to his senses. But he continued to refuse to wear the suit, until the curate asked bluntly whether he intended to follow his mother to the grave without any outward mark of respect.

The idea of his doing anything which lacked respect for her for whom he would gladly have laid down his life, humbled him.

Laying a hand upon his shoulder the curate said, "Felix, every time you conquer that turbulent spirit you make yourself a better, a stronger boy."

Felix ate nothing at breakfast, and as the hour of the funeral drew near became restless. He walked from room to room in the silent old house. Objects that had appeared bright and interesting to him when he first came there now looked dull and commonplace. He found himself at the window of the bedroom which overlooked the little churchyard where his mother was to lie, and stood looking out until his eyes rested on a man digging; then he ran from the room. A woman was in the kitchen preparing a dinner that would not be tasted, and crying at her work. Wearying of going from room to room he settled down in the study. He thought he would read, but no book quite suited his mood. Then he tried to write, and after many laborious attempts to express himself upon a matter near his heart, he

dropped his head on his arm and cried himself to sleep. The curate found him so, a badly-written note lying near his pen. Felix awoke suddenly and handed the very important document to him. It ran:

"FATHER MCCARTHY.

"*Sir*,—I have been taking lessons in boxing. I will fight you any time you like. If you had been a Christian you would not have let him leave mother. You are just an unmarried priest. You don't know anything about real homes. You have no heart. Neither has he. I hate you both. Will you fight?

"FELIX TERRANCE.

"According to God and the Law."

"Do you intend to send this, Felix?" asked the curate, gently.

"Yes. I'm ready for him," came the determined answer.

"Do you think it will do any good?"

"I don't want it to do good."

"It must not go."

"It will go."

"It must not go."

"Why?"

"It is unchristian, illogical, insulting—not at all like the son of the noble woman whose last message was of forgiveness."

"Between them they killed mother."

"Felix, a wrong idea drove your father from his home; do not let his conduct be condemned by an equally wrong idea. He thought it was the still small voice of God that sent him away; you think it is the same blessed voice that urges you to hate him. You are both wrong. I pray that some day you may both be right."

Felix took the letter from the curate's hand and tore it up.

"Oh, Mr. Lloyd," he cried, "don't let them put mother into that hole I saw the man digging. She's not dead, she's not dead; I know she's not dead."

The dreaded hour has come. The road leading to the church is filled with men and women; hundreds from far and near crowd into the ivy-mantled church; the regular stroke of the minute bell falls upon the ear. See how necks are craned to catch a glimpse of the white-robed curate as he takes up a position at the outer door of the porch. Slowly the funeral train moves towards the church. Now the casket is lifted from the hearse and borne by six stalwart farmers. Do you see that straight-limbed, hatless boy walking behind, his heart rent afresh by every note from the bell? And do you see his two tall uncles, Jim and Fred, one at each side of him, ready to protect and comfort him?

"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord."

On meeting the casket at the door the curate pro-

ceeded to read the opening words of the burial service, and led the solemn funeral train up the centre aisle. They placed the casket at the chancel steps, and Felix and his uncles took their places near it. As the curate moved to the reading desk the organist played "Safe in the arms of Jesus." Then followed the beautiful service. At its conclusion the casket was carried to the graveside, the organist playing the Dead March in "Saul." On seeing the open grave Felix stood as if stunned. Supported by creaking ropes the casket was lowered into the grave. Again tolled the bell that "saddened the landscape."

"Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

With the words there came the dull thud of earth upon the casket. Felix, steadied by the strong arms of his uncles, leaned forward to take a farewell look at his mother's resting-place, then fainted.

The insensible body of this thirteen-year-old boy, whose home had been wrecked by the same hand that worked the thumbscrew and the rack, and whose young heart was now filled with bitterness instead of love, was borne tenderly from the scene and laid with loving care upon the couch in the rector's study. Let us leave the broken-hearted boy there. The kneeling figure of a Christian man is at his side.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"I HATE HIM."

BEFORE Uncle Fred returned to Philadelphia, he and his brother Jim visited the quiet old rectory and had a long consultation, with Felix as the centre of their deliberations. For so small a boy he occupied a most exalted position in the minds of the three men, and not without cause. To all intents and purposes he was the sole survivor of a wrecked home. Hillcrest Farm could not now be regarded as the "home" of the man who had deliberately deserted it. It was night-time when they called, and the Rev. David Lloyd received them in the peace-inspiring study. He did not fail to observe the marked difference in the brothers. Jim was ready to take an avenging sword in one hand, and the hand of Felix in the other, and stride through the world looking for the boy's father. He seemed to think that before they set out on their search they might settle accounts with the priest; but just what he thought of doing to that zealous old gentleman in a black cassock, he did not make known. In contrast with this warlike spirit was the hard-headed, calculating disposition of Fred. You see, Uncle Fred had not been in the agricultural implement business for

many years without learning that to lose your temper is to lose your customer; and he counselled now that whether their "customer" was Father McCarthy or John Terrance, they must keep cool heads. They could make their implements as sharp as they liked, but let them be wary and cautious in the using.

"Don't let us gratify the enemy by showing that we are even temporarily crushed. Nothing would please the priest more than to think that the decree was turning out to be so wonderful a wand in the hand of the Pope that one little tap from it could turn a happy home into a memory and break the heart of a Protestant boy," he told his hot-headed brother.

"That's just it. Let us be wise, cautious and undemonstrative," agreed the curate.

"Fight them! The thumbscrew, the rack and the stake did the fine work in olden days; let us use stern measures to-day," returned Jim, so loudly that the boy upstairs started from his sleep.

"Our first duty is to shelter Felix and to plan for his future," said Mr. Lloyd, quietly.

"The little chap must live with me," declared Jim.

"You'd have him as hot as you are, and do nothing with him," said Fred, with a glance at the curate that seemed to say, "For goodness sake keep those two tempestuous spirits apart." Mr. Lloyd was quite of that mind, and played the diplomat.

"I have received a reply to a letter I sent to the rector, telling him all that has happened, and some-

thing of my own views about the future," he told his visitors; "and in it Mr. Reid tells me to endeavor to keep Felix at the rectory for some time, at all events. I will read you an extract. Here it is:

" 'Let your first thought be to save the boy. Ask his uncles to allow him to remain at the rectory for an indefinite period, and continue his studies, that he might pass into the High School.' "

Uncle Fred thought this was a splendid idea, and was inwardly pleased to think how it upset the avenging angel plans of his brother. Arrangements were made there and then, the brothers insisting upon making generous provision for their nephew.

When Felix heard of the plan he appeared to be only half pleased.

"Did Uncle Jim agree to this?" he asked, with a sceptical look.

"He did," answered the curate with evident satisfaction.

"I didn't think he would," said Felix, turning away.

The old grandfather's clock in the dining-room had just struck one the next morning, and the curate awoke from a sound sleep. He thought he heard more than the strike of the hour, and lay listening. It was April, and the night was clear and cool, the sky sprinkled with stars, the full moon flooding his bedroom with her gentle light. Felix slept in another room.

For fifteen minutes he lay thus; then something

impelled him to rise and look from the window, which overlooked the churchyard.

Oh, how still it was! How white the tombstones gleamed in the moonlight!

What was that?

Something, or someone, appeared to be moving among the mounds.

In a moment the startled man had bounded into the adjoining room. The boy's bed had been occupied, but was now empty. His clothes were gone. Dressing rapidly, he hurried from the house, crossed the road and passed into the churchyard. In another instant he was by the side of the boy, prostrate upon his mother's grave.

The curate stooped and raised him.

"Felix, your mother is not here; she is in heaven."

The boy's grief was subdued, and he turned to his companion.

"That's where he'll never get," he said, bitterly.

"We can't tell, Felix."

"Does God let any kind of people into heaven, Mr. Lloyd?"

"All who believe in His Son."

"Wife deserters?"

"Not if they are unrepentant."

"I hope he never repents."

They faced each other in the peaceful light of heaven's lamp, the man calm in his resolution to guide this restless, uncomfortable young mind into a right channel; the boy, equally resolute in his antagonism to his father.

"Felix," said the curate in a broken voice, "I hope the day is not far off when you will repent of having said that."

Tears were in the boy's eyes, but he looked angry, vindictive, almost cruel, as he turned suddenly upon the man of peace and said:

"He killed mother; I hate him."

Anxious to lead the lad from the darkness of wrath into the light of understanding, the curate reminded him that the man he condemned was also a victim; that it was unkind, unchristian, to hate.

"Did Christ hate the men who crowned Him with thorns, spat upon Him, reviled Him, and nailed Him to the Cross?" he asked.

Felix hung down his head and made no answer.

"He forgave the men who killed Him, Felix."

The boy looked up and said earnestly, "I can't help it, Mr. Lloyd. I hate him." Then after a pause he added, "And I hate the priest."

Taking him by the arm the curate led him away.

"Felix," he said, as they passed from the melancholy surroundings, "there are brighter days before us, days in which you will learn that though the ways of God are inscrutable, they are wonderful. Remember, your mother saw nothing in your father's conduct she could not forgive; surely she would not like to hear you say that."

On the following day the Rev. David Lloyd found himself telling Nurse Margaret all about it. Of course the visit to the hospital was quite accidental. He happened to be passing that way at his usual

hour, and Nurse Margaret happened to be busily engaged in training a very refractory creeper at the usual hour, and of course it would have been exceedingly improper for a gentleman to have passed a lady he had met so frequently of late without saying good-morning. It was such a very nice morning, the air smelling so sweet after an April shower, and the little hospital garden looking as trim as its owner.

"He promises to be as difficult to train as my creeper," said Nurse Margaret as the story ended.

"Without the gentle influence of his mother I fear it will be a difficult task," replied her visitor.

"I feel quite interested in the poor boy," went on the nurse.

"Will you talk to him sometimes?"

"Yes, but not here. I will suggest a walk when next I see him. I always take a constitutional in the early morning."

"May I tell him to call to-morrow?"

"Yes, at six, if the weather is fine."

"Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

As he walked away the curate wondered what there was in Nurse Margaret's face that made him like to see it; and in the silence of her room that night, Nurse Margaret found herself thinking of the boy, but he was not alone.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A CONFERENCE OF PRIESTS.

ABOUT this time Father McCarthy found it convenient to take a short vacation. The work of the parish was left in the hands of a Toronto priest who needed a rest, and considered this an excellent way of getting it. So far as externals were concerned he was quite different to the man he was relieving. Father McCarthy was tall and inclined to rotundity. Father O'Flipp was a short man, very thin and very bald. His eyes were set deeply in his head, his nose ran to a sharp point—like his views—and his lips were thin and, except when in action, tightly pressed together. A very keen-looking man, indeed.

On the evening of the day preceding Father McCarthy's departure the two were sitting in the room in which Barbara had made a plea for the return of her husband. The Marysville priest smoked a long clay pipe. During puffs he told the story of what he called "the Terrance affair," and his companion smiled grimly as the incidents were related.

"I regret that the matter turned out so tragically," said the narrator.

"It is better that way," remarked the listener, smacking his lips with evident relish.

"Do you think so?"

"Do you not understand, McCarthy, that had you not made it quite plain to him that his conscience must be his guide, the removal of the widow as an influence would have left him more deeply engrossed in his Protestant wife, and less concerned about the meaning of the decree?"

"Very true; very true."

"And he would have been lost."

"The Protestants appear to be terribly exercised over the unfortunate affair, and I have been roundly abused in one or two quarters. A female named Mutch met me on the street the other day, went off like a cannon, flourished her umbrella until it opened like a parachute, and ended up by calling me a murderer. I was minded to call on the chief of police about it."

"Inflammatory speech is like inflammatory rheumatism, very painful to the person troubled with it."

"I understand, too, that the boy entertains extraordinary animosity towards me. The other day when I went to hitch up I found every movable part of my buggy loosened, and the whole affair fell to pieces."

"They are unreasonably bitter about it. The decree does not affect the civil law; it refers only to the nullity or validity of marriages in the judgment of the Catholic Church, and in the sight of God, which is the same thing."

"It was, without doubt, his inability to determine what the Church thought about such a marriage that drove Terrance away."

"In going he satisfied his conscience."

"In a conversation with me he said that if such a marriage were not holy in the sight of God to-day he did not see how it could be when he was married, thirteen years ago."

"Very intelligent fellow."

"He tried to force me to settle his doubts for him. I declined. In his muddle he ran off."

"Is he likely to waver?"

"The longer he is away the stronger will grow his belief that in leaving her he was obeying conscience."

"Was he devout?"

"No. Impressionable, of course; believed in dreams and possessed a lively dread of purgatory."

"Did he love his spouse?"

"No doubt about it."

"Then his conscience must have spoken very plainly to him."

"I made it quite clear that the civil law recognized his marriage, and explained also that the decree was not retroactive, so that if he cared to go on living with the woman who had been made his wife without the blessed Sacrament of Matrimony, no one would dare to interfere; that most assuredly I would not do so; but you see he went away."

"Conscience doth make cowards of us all."

"Verily."

"You know, McCarthy, the agitators will try to drum us into acknowledging a common civil law. It is to be hoped that the Church will move heaven and earth, and if needs be another place, to prevent legislation along such lines. She must reserve to herself the right to say who shall be her communicants."

"Other religious bodies enjoy it."

"Certainly they do; but do you not see that all of them would be more or less willing to have a universal state law governing marriages, one that would be designed to compel the Catholic Church to acknowledge marriages of this sort?"

"That would indeed be a terrible blow."

"We must retain our right to say how our own people shall receive the sacraments."

"We can refuse to allow an offender to approach the Holy Table, no matter what the civil law says."

"True, but our position would be weakened by the existence of such a law. We have lost enough ground."

"In his last interview with me, the man Terrance grew violent, and shaking his fist under my nose, vowed that if ever he found he had made a mistake in leaving his wife, he would remember that I had not said one word to guide him, and would be revenged. I tried to humble him after the threat, but he left my presence very like a madman."

"Let us hope that he may continue to view his position in the right light."

While the two priests talked, an intelligent cow opened the garden gate and prepared to spend the rest of the night among the newly raked beds, but being a quiet-minded animal, bearing no malice towards the owner of the garden, she left the beds at once and stationed herself on the walk near the gate, which had been carefully shut behind her. In consequence of this thoughtfulness Father McCarthy found his garden safe and sound in the morning, and the two priests enjoyed a hearty laugh over a cow that had so good a conscience.

"Persecution only strengthens the position or cause of the victim," philosophized Father O'Flipp.

"You see that our young friend is quite formidable. I must padlock the gate lest a cow with a less sensitive conscience should come in," said Father McCarthy, smiling.

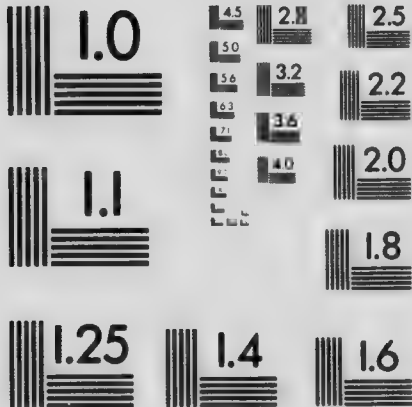
"Cannot he be won over by kindness?"

"That is a task I would not undertake at my time of life," replied the parish priest, with a shake of the head.



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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LOVE'S YOUNG STORY.

Two years have passed since the incidents related in the last chapter occurred. During that time little worthy of special mention happened to the principal characters in this story. Felix, now in the High School, had grown into a handsome lad of sixteen, tall, straight as an arrow, and as lithe and sinewy as a young Indian. He lived at the rectory, loved those around him, and, in turn, was loved by them. He visited his mother's grave frequently, and on his return to the house always shut himself in his room.

Life in the parish was much the same. Mr. Tawkesbury still held forth at his store, and Mrs. Mutch continued to find pleasure in being publisher and editor-in-chief of *The Mutch News*. Jim King and his wife would have liked Felix to be with them, but on second thought confessed that the boy was better off at the rectory. Hillcrest Farm was still in the hands of a tenant.

The curate and Felix are in the rectory garden. Let us hear them as they talk.

"Let me be the first to congratulate you, Felix. You have worked well; you have succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations. Your first two

years at High School do you the greatest credit. I am proud of you."

"Thank you, Mr. Lloyd. If it had not been for you I would have had no heart to study. How can I repay you?"

"You owe me nothing, Felix."

"But I do. Don't you remember that night two years ago when I defied you and declared that I would run away?"

"I remember. But why recall those dark days?"

"I like to do so, Mr. Lloyd. I like to think of that night, because it was the turning point for me. I can never forget how angry you were with me, and how cheeky I was to you."

"Yes, yes; I'm afraid you were a terrible boy then."

"And you locked the door, and put the key in your pocket, and put your back against the wall and told me that if you couldn't bring me to reason with common sense you would knock it into me with the gloves."

The curate laughed.

"That was a great fight we had, Felix. You came at me like a young tiger and battered away with such terrific force I nearly gave in. Ah, you don't know how near you were to winning that bout."

"I'm glad I didn't."

"So am I."

It was summer time, and the rectory garden was a riot of beauty. The day had been unusually hot,

but the evening was calm and cool. The old rector, now grown so feeble that he could do little parish work, had just passed into the house to join Mrs. Reid, who sat at the open window in the study.

"It is so refreshing near this newly-watered creeper, Haslem," she said as he entered.

"Felix has come in with the results. He is first again, with honors," said the old gentleman, seating himself beside her.

"A wonderful boy. So like his mother."

"Not quite, my dear. She had an extraordinary command over herself. The boy is not yet tamed."

"Then, Haslem, dear, I hope he never will be. I don't like tamed boys."

"Nor do I; but there is something within him that must be conquered. Mrs. Laney was telling me when she called yesterday that he had told her son that he could forgive every sin on the calendar except that committed by his father; and added with great seriousness that he hoped that when they met he would be big enough to make a stand-up fight of it."

"I can't help but admire the boy's ambition to straighten accounts with his father."

"But not in that manner."

"No, of course not, Haslem. He might go to the priest for some suggestions in the art of torturing the human heart by soft words."

"I am afraid, my dear, that your admiration for the youth is leading you astray. You are not like yourself."

"Haslem, I have always thought with you because I know how wise you are; but I cannot, I really cannot, agree with you about the Terrance affair. I think his act was sheer cowardice."

"Prompted by a power that greater men than he could not withstand."

"Surely, Haslem, you do not condone his sin?"

"Not in the least. I merely lay the blame for the home-wrecking somewhere else."

"The priest?"

"The Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Archbishop has power to grant dispensations of religion, which means that there is no fixed rule governing mixed marriages. This is wrong. The civil law should be supreme. Men and women live in an atmosphere of uncertainty. What right has the Church of Rome to say what is, or is not, lawful union? Are we the subjects of King George, or of the Pope?"

"Let the Dominion Government make an unalterable law saying who is, and who is not, married. The decree means that if a Protestant man marries a Roman Catholic woman he must leave his latch-key on the outside for the priest to enter his home whenever he likes, and sow seeds of discord between man and wife."

"We must have a law under which we shall feel absolutely safe—one which will give us protection against priestly interference. When the law of the land declares a marriage to be valid there must be

no license given to any Church to pronounce that union null and void.

"The decree breaks down the doors of countless homes and places domestic peace in the keeping of the Roman priests. It defies British law and flaunts the power of the Roman hierarchy before the people.

"We look to the state for protection.

"The decree sneers at the Protestant ministry, and gives Rome power to turn a man into a wife deserter—blessed and approved of by his Church. We must have none of it. Germany and Austria-Hungary flung it from them. Let the British Empire do likewise.

"Rome has lost her hold upon the Old World, and comes now in her might and magnificence to fasten it upon the New."

"Then punishing John Terrance wouldn't do much good?"

"Very little. Canada must have a uniform marriage law, permitting of no interference by any Church with people married in accordance with that law."

"But the priests could still work upon the feelings of men like Terrance."

"It should be made an indictable offence for a representative or agent of a church, whether he be a clergyman or otherwise, to say or do anything to disturb the mind of a man or woman whose marriage may not have been in accordance with an ecclesiastical rule, but which was nevertheless perfectly legal."

"It may come to that."

"Surely it will, in time. Protestant and Roman Catholic should unite in protesting against the *Ne Temere* decree, which is intended to be a means of seizing the infant at its birth and keeping it within the power of the Roman Church until death."

"May I come in?" asked a voice at the door.

The rector and Mrs. Reid turned to welcome Felix. He told them of his success and thanked them in a few straightforward sentences for their continued kindness. He put an arm around Mrs. Reid's neck and told her how happy she had made him. She looked upon him with motherly eyes.

"I met Father McCarthy to-day, and he offered to drive me home," said Felix.

"Did you accept?" asked Mrs. Reid, eagerly.

"I didn't; didn't even answer him," replied the boy.

"Do you think that was polite?" asked the old gentleman.

Felix had grown to love this white-haired servant of God. He had been in daily intercourse with him for two years, facing his placid countenance at the first meal of the day, accompanying him in his walks, reading books from his hands, hearing them interpreted, and imbibing his views. Going over to where the old gentleman sat, he laid his hand upon his shoulder, bent with years and study, and said, "No, it was not polite, but I couldn't, I really couldn't."

"Is there really something that Felix Terrance cannot do?" said the rector, feigning surprise.

Felix winced.

"There are some things I don't think I ought to do," he said.

The rector did not wish to lead his young and spirited companion into a debate that would have ended in a heart, and kindly dismissed the matter by saying that politeness, even to a man's enemies, was never harmful, and might do good.

In discussing the incident with Mr. Lloyd later that evening, Felix said that if he thought the rector considered it necessary he would apologize to the priest.

"And while I'm about it, Mr. Lloyd," he said, "I might as well own up to unscrewing the nuts in his buggy and shutting the cow in his garden. That would be a complete surrender, wouldn't it?"

"There you go! Off to extremes, as usual," said the curate, making a terrific effort to suppress smile. "Come on, let's have a long walk."

They passed the hospital. It happened to be the hour when Nurse Margaret was strolling up and down the garden path, thinking about nothing in particular. When they crossed the road they saw her.

"I've forgotten something. I won't be long," cried Felix, suddenly, and away he went, leaving the two looking after him in amazement. Then they looked at each other, but not in amazement.

"What a wonderful night it is," said the curate.

"Beautiful. Everything so still, the flowers so

sweet, the air so refreshing," said Nurse Margaret, her face aglow with the joy of living.

"May I sit on your verandah till he returns?"

As there was no just cause or impediment why he should not be seated upon the verandah, he was given permission, Nurse Margaret standing near. You see, they were awaiting the return of Felix.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes slipped away. The dusk came on and the garden smelt sweeter than ever, and Nurse Margaret must have been growing weary standing so long, because when her companion asked her to sit down she did so. Stars began to peep, which was exceedingly rude on their part.

There is the old moon coming up now, looking bright and fearless as she turns her silver rays upon the verandah. And, strange to say, her services must have been most opportune, for the curate at once discovered something in Nurse Margaret's face that made him very silent. And, by a remarkable coincidence, the same silver light enabled Nurse Margaret to see something in the curate's countenance that made her turn away, a deep blush covering her face.

Now, the best blushes in the world never stay within bounds; they have a little habit of creeping beneath the ear and painting that small area of velvet-like flesh which lies there, partly covered by little waves of hair, through which the rich pink peeps in a most bewitching manner. The curate must have seen this blush turn the corner. He grew exceedingly bold. Laying a hand upon the arm nearest

him he called its owner by name. She turned and looked at him. It was then he saw the rest of the blush, and thought it was like a piece of sky he had seen at eventide in Italy, only very much richer.

Just then the moon hid herself behind a cloud, perhaps to enjoy a good laugh, we do not know. The stars continued their vigilance in a shameless manner, twinkling and blinking without any heart at all. However, they were too far away to hear what the curate said.

"Nurse Margaret—Margaret."

There was no answer.

"Do you know that you are an angel?"

He heard a faintly whispered "Am I?"

Her face was redder than ever; her heart beat so loud she almost heard it; a quiver of excitement passed over her, and a nervous little sigh escaped from its beautiful prison.

An arm stole around her waist. To him she could no longer be celestial. She turned her head away, and tried gently to remove the encircling member, but only succeeded in causing an increase in pressure. His lips were near her ear; she could feel his warm breath.

"Margaret, I love you."

She turned and looked into his eyes, and saw there the fires of a great, devouring love; she saw the face of a strong, fearless, Christian man, and the figure of an athlete. She knew she loved him.

"I must go," she whispered.

"Not now, dearest. Hear me," he pleaded.

"But I really must go. My sister needs me."

"Not more than I do."

Both stood up.

Seizing her hands, he held them so tightly in his own that she winced. He saw the slight shadow upon her face and guessed the cause. His penitence was abject. Raising her little hands to his lips he covered them with kisses.

How beautiful she looked.

"Margaret, dear, I want you for my wife. Let me take you from these scenes of tears and pain; let me fill your life with joy and sunshine. I have no wealth to lay at your feet—only a boundless devotion. Will you be my wife?"

He had released her, and now stood with outstretched arms, inviting her to come, come, come. His face was flushed with love, and he hungered for her reply.

Turning towards him again, her face slightly pale, her eyes filled with a soft light, she smiled her answer. Taking her in his arms he pressed her tightly to him. As he held her thus she leaned back and looked into his face. Then her arms crept about his neck.

When the Rev. David Lloyd went to his bedroom that night he found a note on his dressing table.

"Dear Mr. Lloyd," it ran, "when I saw her in the garden I knew you could do without me. I have been reading Fox's Book of Martyrs. It made me angry and I went to bed early. Felix."

Mrs. Reid shed tears of joy when she heard that Nurse Margaret was to become Mrs. Lloyd.

"You have chosen wisely, David," she told the happy curate.

The rector was just as glad, and when Felix heard of it he quietly remarked that he thought something like that was going on.

"And can't you congratulate me?" asked the delighted man.

Felix put his arm around his companion's neck and gave him a healthy boy's hug.

"You bet I can, Mr. Lloyd."

It was during one of their long walks and they had just reached the bottom of the hill upon which Hillcrest Farm stood. It looked strangely beautiful to-day. They both looked towards the place without speaking. There are times when the heart can find no utterance. Felix turned away, and picking up a stone hurled it into the shining river. The missile fell with a splash, rudely disturbing the water; but only for a little while. As it sank the calmness of the surface returned and the river glided gently on.

The curate saw this and turned to the boy.

"How like life was that, Felix," he said. "All is peace and contentment for a season; then comes a disturbing element and confusion reigns; but the trouble sinks from view and all is quiet again and we are at rest."

"I don't think I'll ever be at rest, Mr. Lloyd," said the boy sadly.

"Rest comes to the conqueror, Felix."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"JOHN TERRANCE—VAGRANT."

THE scene is changed to No. 1 Police Station, Toronto. It is late at night and a prematurely old man, his hair almost white, his brow deeply furrowed, his face pinched and careworn, his eyes devoid of interest in their surroundings, his clothes almost in rags, stands before the burly, well fed sergeant, his coat sleeve tightly gripped by a policeman.

"Found him sleepin' in a doorway, sergeant."

"What were you doin' ther'?" asked the officer at the desk.

"He has just told you, sleeping," answered the prisoner.

"Where do you come from?"

"I have no home."

"What's your name?"

"Any will do for a homeless man."

"No, it won't. Give us your right name."

"John Terrance."

The information was entered into a book.

"Age?"

"Forty-four, I believe."

"Don't you know for certain?"

"I've lost track of some things."

"Religion?"

"None."

"I'll put you down Christian."

"Are you hungry?"

"I could eat something."

"Here, have half of this."

The man ate ravenously, the sergeant and constable staring in amazement at the manner in which the food was crammed into his mouth.

"Put him into No. 4 and make things as comfortable as you can. I guess the poor devil needs a rest," said the sergeant, as he turned to his paper.

The iron door of the cell closed with a resounding bang and John Terrance lay down to sleep. In the morning he was aroused early and led out with the other unfortunates to the "Black Maria," then driven to the Court House, where he was placed in the "cage." Men and women of vile repute were crowded into the area and filled in their time by shouting coarse jests at one another. The crowd was cosmopolitan. There were Italians, English, Canadians, Macedonians, Americans and Russian Jews. The babel of tongues bewildered him. A Salvation Army officer came into their midst and a young fellow "cooped" for the first time called him over and asked that a good word be spoken on his behalf. Later a young man came downstairs from the court room and offered medical help to the drunkard who wished to straighten up and recapture his manhood.

Lewd women jeered at the young men "in" for theft and polluted their ears with vile suggestions. A barrister, anxious for a talk with a client, appeared upon the scene and called the man's name aloud. Then they put their heads together and prepared the line of defence. The stench from the bodies of unclean foreigners, the garlic-laden breath of the Jews, the fumes from the sour-stomached whiskey drinkers, made the atmosphere of the place nauseating. One well-dressed woman, straight from a good home where little children called her mother, crouched in a corner of the cage, her hands shutting the sight from her eyes. She had been caught taking a trinket in a departmental store and had spent the night in jail. Her heartbroken husband had been notified overnight and now waited, with two of the children, for the court to open that they might see their mother in the dock. A young bank clerk trembled in his shoes as he poured his woe into the ears of the Army officer. He had been with friends the night before and, after drinking too much, had met a party of girls. The address they had visited had been under the police eye for some time. It was "pulled" while he was there, and he dreaded the story reaching the bank. The police had already told him he was sure of his discharge from the police court, providing he gave the evidence necessary to convict the keeper and the girls as inmates. He disliked the task—it seemed mean, even to women of that class, but he would do it to save himself.

A drunken old woman with a hundred prior convictions was quietly plotting to impose on the credulity of a rescue worker, who would get her out of the dock to do nothing more than "sober up." That scheme when it worked, and it frequently did, was better than serving thirty days.

At ten o'clock John Terrance was taken upstairs to face the magistrate. It was Saturday morning. The magistrate, General Gatling, was famed the world over for his devotion to the Empire, his military genius, and the lightning despatch with which he did his work. He understood human nature from A to Z, and law had to give that knowledge precedence. Coke and Littleton came next. His humor was as dry as the tongues of the wine bibbers and whiskey drinkers who faced him. The replies of witnesses or prisoners, drawn from them by his searching questions, often turned solemnity into merriment.

The Crown Attorney, a tall, clean-shaven man, with a countenance radiating good nature and sound health, entered court. The possessor of a clear, "uncovered" head, he had an inquisitive mind, an eye that looked into the inner recesses of the hearts of witnesses, a tongue touched with the fire of wit, and a personality that would have looked well arrayed in priestly vestments.

"There is a peculiar story behind this man, your worship," he said. "He is a Roman Catholic and I understand he deserted his Protestant wife because

of the *Ne Temere* decree, and has since been a wanderer, seeking rest and finding none. I am told by the police that his wife died of a broken heart shortly after he went away, but that his son is living near the desolated home. I want a week's remand."

When the crown attorney spoke of Barbara's death John Terrance reeled in the dock, but was pushed back to the rail by two malefactors. Seizing the iron bar he stared blankly before him, his face an ashen gray, his teeth chattering.

"Dead—broken heart—dead," he muttered in hollow tones, "can this be true—can—this—be—true?"

Throwing back his head, his eyes glazed by approaching insensibility, he cried in a voice that rang through the marble corridors of the court-house:

"O God, forgive me!" then fell heavily upon the floor.

Two burly policemen carried him below.

Resting his clasped hands upon the blotter, the magistrate, with characteristic sangfroid, twirled his thumbs and addressing the Crown Attorney said, "It is really remarkable what extraordinary results follow in the wake of religious differences."

CHAPTER XL.

FELIX WINS A BATTLE.

THE news of John Terrance's arrest was forwarded to the chief of police at Marysville and at once produced a panic in the interior of that great man. When the message arrived he was deeply engrossed in one of the most difficult problems connected with the administration of police affairs in Marysville,—that of trying to beat the chief of the fire department at checkers. To-day the old fire fighter had been uglier than ever in his moves, and the custodian-in-chief of the public safety and keeper of the town's morals had more than once leapt up in a rage and sworn with more or less science at his brass-buttoned opponent.

The letter was read a dozen times. After the twelfth perusal he scratched his head and made an official utterance, the importance of which cannot be over-estimated, consisting as it did of the exceptionally brilliant words, "Well, I'll be jigged!"

But instead of being jigged he was prompted to go over to the Rectory with the news. His appearance threw Mrs. Reid into a state of alarm. After she had recovered her speech she conducted him into the study, where he remained closeted with the

rector. Emerging therefrom he strode away with more excitement in his mind than he had ever before crowded into his helmet. He had been asked to keep the matter as quiet as possible for the time being and did so by telephoning the strange tidings to his esteemed friend the bartender at Hogan's Hotel. That gentleman, being richly endowed with a knowledge of human nature, remained at the telephone and asked to be connected with Mr. Tawesbury's store. His last words to Gabriel were, "Be sure you let Mrs. Mutch know; she'll get things goin'."

At a consultation in the study that afternoon it was decided that the curate should break the news to Felix, then go to Toronto to see the Crown Attorney."

The opportunity to inform Felix did not come until nearly bed-time. As was often his wont Felix had gone into the curate's room for a good-night chat and found him stretched on his bed. Jumping up as the boy entered, Mr. Lloyd closed the door.

"Felix, your father is in Toronto."

The boy looked up in surprise. All he said was "Oh?"

"Did you quite understand me?" asked the curate.

"Yes, and I hope he won't come here."

"He is not likely to do so, unless the police release him."

"The police? What has he been doing, Mr. Lloyd?"

"Nothing criminal. He is a vagrant."

"A what?"

"Vagrant—an unfortunate being with whom life has been so hard that he fails to show that he possesses visible means of support; a penniless, hungry, broken-spirited, homeless man, despised by most people, kicked and buffeted by uncharitable men, and kept on the move by the police."

This was said so seriously that the vagrant's son was moved. The curate watched him intently, ready to make use of every sign of compassion that might appear on the boy's face.

"Is he all that you say, Mr. Lloyd?"

"I believe so."

There was silence for a full minute, then Felix looked up and said, "He brought it upon himself."

"Are you judging him?"

"I'm saying what's true."

"What you think is true."

"Well, I suppose that's it."

"I am going to Toronto on Friday to get him out of the hands of the police. Will you come with me?"

"Never!"

"Why?"

"Oh, you always want to know why, Mr. Lloyd. I can't forgive him."

The curate gazed steadily into the boy's face. He saw no signs of sorrow, no unbending of the spirit.

"Felix," he said solemnly, "what a terrible plight

you and I would be in to-day if Christ had ever said 'I cannot forgive.' Let us part for the night. I will not again refer to the subject, since it gives you pain."

Felix was strangely quiet during the next three days. No one saw him laugh, but Mrs. Reid told the rector she had seen tears in his eyes. On Thursday evening, as the sun was turning the western sky into a fiery red, he went over to his mother's grave and remained there until dark. On returning to the house he passed directly to his bedroom.

Seated below, in the hallowed quiet of the study, were the rector, Mrs. Reid and the curate. They knew of the conflict that had been going on in the boy's mind during the week and feared the worst.

"No human power can crush that determined spirit," said the old rector.

"Then let us pray to-night and leave the rest with God," replied the curate.

On the following morning Mr. Lloyd was astir early. The Toronto train left Marysville at nine o'clock. Terrance would not appear in court until Saturday morning, but there was the Crown Attorney to see and arrangements to be made in the event of his discharge. Felix came down to breakfast after the three had been seated some time. His face was pale, but his eyes shone with a brightness they had not seen there that week. Each bade him good-morning, and he returned the greetings in a clear voice. During the meal no reference was made

to the curate's visit to Toronto, but, when the second grace had been said, Felix looked up and addressed the rector.

"Mr. Reid," he said firmly, "I am going with Mr. Lloyd to bring father back to Chippendale."

The rector went over to him and taking his hand said, fervently, "Felix, you have won a great fight."

The boy bowed his head and a thin, trembling hand was laid upon it in benediction.

Mrs. Reid buried her face in her hands. The countenance of the curate was flooded with happiness.

"Oh, may Thy soldiers, faithful, true and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win, with them, the victor's crown of gold.
Alleluia!"

CHAPTER XLI.

THE VAGRANT FINDS A FRIEND.

ON Saturday morning the Toronto Police Court was crowded with eager, expectant, curious people. The newspapers had taken up the sensational arrest of John Terrance and during the intervening six days had told the story of the *Ne Temere* in detail. The back benches of the court, usually occupied by idle men, who enjoyed the contemplation of their fellow-man's misery, were packed tightly with well-dressed men and women, most of them members of Protestant and Catholic churches. It was ten minutes before ten, the hour for opening court, but every inch of space in the stuffy room was occupied. The corridor was just as crowded and the policeman on duty at the door had to call for help to keep the multitude from converting his plump person into pulp. He frequently shouted angrily at them, "You can't get in here, I tell you, it's no use pushin'." Many clergymen of various denominations had come to court and were favored with standing room to the right of the dock, but had to be content to be wedged in with policemen who should have been asleep, but were obliged to be on hand to give evidence against prisoners they had taken overnight.

At the barristers' table many of the most learned criminal lawyers sat, their brief-bags before them. Extra chairs had been brought in to accommodate these very wise pleaders for the wicked. One eminent counsel, short of stature, but bristling with brains, sat near the Crown Attorney's chair, deeply engrossed in his little black book, filled with the names of the unfortunate and the ungodly. To the right of him lounged a tall, lean, learned friend, with a thoughtful face. He, too, had a book whose pages bore the names of forlorn hopes led by him from darkness into light. To the left stood the press gallery, every chair taken; every foot of standing room occupied by scribes and pharisees. Here and there could be seen the "innocent" face of a very knowing little copy-boy, whose daily experience it was to have his ears polluted by recitals of immorality and his mind entertained by stories of crime and brutality. In front of the press gallery scores of detectives and police officials were lined three deep. The crush was so great many of them were forced to encroach upon the sacred steps which led to the throne of the chief inspector, who now sat in solitary splendor, with the air of a man whom Providence had weighted down with the sins of other people. The clerk's enclosure contained but two men, the one was short and wiry, the custodian of court fines and the finest collection of anecdotes on the continent; the other was of Pharaoh's lean stock and possessed of more brains than hair.



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Sharp on the stroke of ten the magistrate entered court, blowing his nose vigorously. He settled himself in his saddlebag chair and gave a cursory glance round the crowded court, remarking to the clerk that the atmosphere was more unbearable than usual.

The entrance of his worship was the signal for the chief inspector to arise and command order, which he did in a rich Irish brogue.

The Crown Attorney entered court bearing a sheaf of "information" slips which he spread out before him very much as a fortune teller would lay out the cards while the victim waited and wondered what awful secret each contained. He nodded good-mornings to several of his learned brothers, calling them by the names they received when they were learned in nothing more than the simple, infantile art of getting nourishment.

Seated in the dock were four women and two men, the rest of the male prisoners waiting their turn on the stairs. The females were dressed in gorgeous apparel, which virtuous women would have been ashamed to wear, and their butterfly conduct was told of in detail by the police. They faced the recital brazenly and paid their fines with the indifference of people who know there is "more where that came from."

"John Terrance," called the magistrate, in a clear voice, and immediately a hush fell upon the court. Necks were craned and stretched on all sides that their owners might catch the first glimpse of the

prisoner. Barristers turned in their chairs to look at the dock, newspaper men raised themselves to see over the heads of the detectives and police in front of the gallery; a hundred upturned faces could be seen through the open door and more than once a rush was made by those outside to break the police guard. Drawing his baton a constable displayed it to the mob.

"The first man that tries to get through this door'll get a cracked head," he shouted.

The morning was dull and the court was illumined by electric light. When the name of John Terrance was called a haggard-faced man stood up directly beneath the handsome chandelier and at the same moment there was a slight movement of unrest in the furthest corner of the court, and the face of a good-looking boy of sixteen years was thrust between the arms of two tall onlookers. Immediately behind him stood a young man in a clerical suit. But the man in the dock saw naught of either. He looked less disreputable than when, a week before, he had been brought into the station. His face was still unshaved, but his hair, after a daily wash at the jail, now looked snowy white.

The magistrate spoke again. "John Terrance, you are charged with being a vagrant. Are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty."

"Have you no home?"

"No."

"No friends?"

"No."

"No money?"

"No."

"No work?"

"No."

Turning to the Crown Attorney the magistrate said, "What do you know about this man?"

"A great deal, your worship," was the reply. "You may remember he appeared before you a week ago and was remanded until to-day. I have made enquiries and find that he is the Chippendale farmer who left his wife and son some two years ago in consequence of the *Ne Temere* decree. He is a Roman Catholic; his wife was a Protestant. She died after he deserted the home. I would like your worship to hear the story from his own lips."

A dead silence fell upon the crowd of excited onlookers and every eye turned in the direction of the wretched figure in the dock.

The magistrate addressed him. "Well, what have you got to say?"

Bracing himself for his task John looked suspiciously around, as though expecting to see some dreaded foe come forward suddenly and seal his lips for ever. Apparently satisfying himself that no such enemy lurked in the court room he began to speak. His voice was weak at first and he trembled so much he was obliged to grip the rail. But it became louder and more confident.

"I've not got much to say, sir. Two and a half years ago I was a prosperous farmer in Chippendale. I had a pretty home on the hillside and an angel for a wife. The manliest little lad in the district called me father. We were all happy—happy—happy. I loved them, God knows I loved them, and I thought that nothing in this world could bring unhappiness into our home. But I was wrong. My wife was a Protestant. We were married by her minister. When that decree was read in the church it started me thinkin' she wasn't my wife and that if I kept on livin' with her I was damnin' my soul. The thought of havin' to leave her near drove me mad, and I went to the priest time and again to get him to put me right. But he would never say exactly what the decree meant. *He said he left it to my conscience.*"

Here he paused and the eager crowd took breath. The magistrate's eyes did not leave the prisoner's face.

Straightening himself again the man in the dock continued.

"About that time my old mother died, but before she went she told me I was livin' in sin with my wife. *She said the priest had told her so.* He never told me, and when I asked him if he said so to her he only asked me if her poor old lips would lie. *He wouldn't give me a straight answer to anythin'.*

"I got so frightened because of the hell tortures I had been taught I would get if I sinned against the Church I decided to save my soul by goin' away.

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O God, how I remember that night! She looked more beautiful than ever when she told me she was my wife till death, and that no church could make it different. But I wouldn't listen, and when I said I was goin' and my boy called me a coward I struck him.

"I became a wanderer. I was robbed in Chicago and a kind old Methodist farmer befriended me. I promised him I'd go back home, but I didn't. A priest told me to go as my conscience guided. I couldn't understand the conscience part of it. I felt all the time I was doin' wrong in leavin' her, but when I came to decidin' that the decree agreed with that I begun to think I was wrong—that as I hadn't received the Sacrament the Church took no notice of my marriage, that I would be punished in hell for livin' in sin.

"That kept me away. I never knew she had died, or I believe I would have come back. I kept on goin' from place to place. I couldn't work long anywhere. The folks at the farmhouses used to watch me as if there was somethin' wrong, and they would tell me I'd better go somewhere else. I tried all kinds of jobs in the cities I went to but couldn't keep them. *I got no rest anywhere.* One day I would think I was right in leavin' home; the next day I would be thinkin' of goin' back. I couldn't get the matter settled.

"Then I took to drinkin', and the whiskey made me not care whether I was right or wrong. A

Presbyterian minister met me one day and took me to his house and gave me clothes and food and a job around his garden. I told him what I'd done and he said I must go back, that it wasn't my conscience at all that was speakin', that it was the devil trying to make me think I was doin' right by doin' wrong. I believed him for a time, but I read in the paper one day that the decree couldn't make a marriage like mine a sin against God one day and a holy act another, and I went on thinkin' I would save myself after death by keepin' away."

The face of the prisoner became suddenly inflamed with anger and looked almost grotesque. He seized the dock rail with both hands and shouted loudly:

"But I was wrong, wrong, wrong! I've killed my wife, broken the heart of my son and shattered the home. I believed it was the voice of God. *It was only fear of the Church.*

"If I had my life to live again no priest should come between me and the woman I had vowed before God to love, honor and cherish till death.

"I'm an outcast now, a vagrant you call me, without a cent, without a friend. I am worse. I am a home-wrecker, a murderer. O God, help me!"

Dropping his head upon the arm that rested on the dock rail, the wretched man sobbed bitterly. Men's faces grew white and women wept.

Rising from his seat, his face betraying no feeling, the Crown Attorney turned to the staff inspector.

"Bring in Felix Terrance," he commanded.

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At the sound of his son's name the man in the dock looked up.

"He's in court somewhere," replied the official.

A slight commotion took place at the end of the barrister's table just then and the boy forced himself through the crowd, followed closely by the curate. Both were flushed with excitement. A policeman cleared a space in the centre of the court. When it was reached the Crown Attorney stepped up to Felix, and laying a hand upon his shoulder spoke to the man in the dock.

"You said you had no friend in the world. Look here."

Felix advanced to the dock front and putting up his right hand said quietly, "Come back to the farm, father."

Seizing his son's hand John Terrance kissed it a dozen times and cried aloud "May God forgive me! My son, my son!"

The police cut a passage through the crowd so that father and son, arm in arm, could leave the court. They were followed quickly by the curate, who had lingered a moment to shake the Crown Attorney's hand.

That evening, as the moon rose in her silver splendor, father and son stood near a grave in St. Paul's churchyard. Their heads were bared, the man's face drawn with pain, his white hair gleaming its tragic story in the moonlight. The boy looked calm and

handsome, that majestic peace that had lain upon the face of his mother now resting on his own.

The curate looked upon this scene from the rectory window and there came from his heart a fervent "Thank God!"

The grave was marked by a plain marble slab bearing the words:

SACRED TO
THE MEMORY OF
BARBARA TERRANCE
A VICTIM OF THE NE TEMERE

FINIS.

